ABSTRACT

ACCULTURATION AND ITS AFFECT ON AFRO-CARIBBEAN MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS

by Bertranna Alero Abrams

Immigrant families prone to poverty may have a difficult time acculturating to American society. Children and parents often vary in levels of acculturation which contributes to parent-child conflict. Children who are a part of these families have a higher chance of being involved with the child welfare system (Johnson, 2007). Thus, it is imperative to evaluate this dynamic and work towards stabilizing future outcomes in these parent-child relationships. The current study explores the stresses and strains related to acculturation and how mothers and daughters cope through semi-structured interviews with seven women of Caribbean descent living in a borough of New York City. Findings indicate that living in a predominantly immigrant community has slowed the process of Acculturation for both the mother and daughter thus preserving their Caribbean culture.
ACCULTURATION AND ITS AFFECT ON AFRO-CARIBBEAN MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS

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Bertranna Abrams

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

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Advisor _________________________

(Dr. Kevin Bush)

Reader _________________________

(Dr. Carolyn Slotten)

Reader _________________________

(Dr. Aflred Joseph)
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Acculturation and its Impact on Afro-Caribbean Mother-Daughter Relationships

The purpose of the current study was to examine the affects of Acculturation on Afro-Caribbean mother-daughter relationships. The stresses and strains related to acculturation and how mothers and daughters cope with these stressors were explored. The concept of acculturation and Ecological Theory are used to guide this examination of mother-daughter relationships in an inner city context.

When two or more cultures interact with one another they begin to take on characteristics of the dominant culture, this process is called Acculturation (Berry, 2005). The minority culture, in this case West Indian, refers to people who are born or have descendants from the Caribbean. This study looks specifically at acculturation and its impact on Afro-Caribbean mothers and daughters. The target population is focused on second generation daughters, which are daughters who are born in America to immigrant parents (Hillaire, 2006), and immigrant mothers of African descent born in the Caribbean (i.e., first generation).

Many immigrant second generation offspring are conflicted with a need to preserve their culture and to fit in with their peers. This need to fit in causes Caribbean parents, mothers especially, to become stricter in order to prevent further assimilation into American society of their children (Baptiste, Hardy & Lewis 1997). The present study examines how these processes affect the relationships between immigrant mothers and their second generation daughters. It is hypothesized that the lack of communication about the daughter’s acculturation experience between mother and daughter may cause conflict between them, and may ultimately result in the daughter’s abandonment of the Caribbean culture altogether (i.e. assimilation).

According to Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1994), many Afro-Caribbean parents migrate to the American inner city. These parents hope that the education that America offers will help their children to one day propel the family into economic mobility. As Caribbean second generation children begin to attend the inner city school system they are faced with ridicule and conflict from their peers and are faced with an inner city culture that goes against what their parents expect from them. This Americanization (i.e. acculturation) can take on negative forms as Caribbean children begin to take on negative characteristics that some inner
city youth have developed, such as involvement with drugs and crime. Portes and Zhou assert that children of non-white immigrants living in the inner city may never have the opportunities to attain economic mobility no matter how acculturated they become.

A case study conducted by Suki Desai and Melanie Gooden (1995) tells the story of a second generation Afro-Caribbean girl named Marcia living with her single mother Janet. Marcia was faced with the challenge of not being accepted by her peers because of the strict rules established by her mother. Janet, who was born in the Caribbean, was also responsible for two younger children and expected her daughter to follow certain rules and to do chores that she herself did when she grew up in her native country. Marcia began to run away from home and opted to live on the streets where she often prostituted for money. Social workers who were assigned to the family ignored any cultural differences that the family had, and perceived Janet to be uncooperative and placed Marcia in authority’s hands.

The case study revealed that Janet became exceedingly strict because she wanted to protect her daughter from the deviance that existed in their community. In response, Marcia became more rebellious and removed herself even further from her mother. The actions of these particular providers seemed to have made the situation worse by not looking at the relationship between mother and daughter, and also not understanding how important it is for family to stay together in the Caribbean culture. After looking at how differently Janet and her daughter perceived their situations and looking at the strengths in their relationship, Desai and Gooden were able to come up with more ways on how to manage differences between mother and daughter while also understanding the family’s Caribbean culture.

The majority of Afro-Caribbean people living in the U.S. reside in inner city neighborhoods where they are likely to be neighbors with or live adjacent to African Americans. These inner city neighborhoods can have problems such as a high prevalence of drug use, poverty, poor health, and deviant behavior. The present research was conducted in the New York City borough of Brooklyn. According to New York Urban planning (2000), Brooklyn had a foreign born population of 30.6% in 2000. Of that 30.6%, 71.2% were of Caribbean non-Hispanic descent. The top four countries of origin that resided in the borough were Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana, and Barbados; which are all Caribbean Countries.
This study fills the gap in the current literature by examining these issues within the mother-daughter context in Afro-Caribbean families. Some daughters become deviant as they try to escape the strict lifestyle that their mothers place on them and many begin to abandon their mother’s culture altogether (Zhou, 1997). According to Johnson (2007), immigrant families who are more prone to poverty may have a harder time acculturating to American culture. She also infers that children who are a part of these families have a higher chance of being eventually involved with the child welfare system. It is very important to evaluate this dynamic and to work towards a goal of stabilizing the future outcomes for the second generation daughter and solidify her relationship with her mother.

**Parenting in the Caribbean**

A child is meant to obey their parent and the parent is meant to take care of the child. The sayings “spare the rod and spoil the child” and “a child should be seen and not heard” are very notorious among parents (Brown & Johnson, 2008; Evans & Davies, 1997). Children are valued and seen as a sign of maturity for parents, but there is little interaction between them and their parents (Bagley, Morton, Rutter, & Yule, 1975; Dubrow, Pena, Masten, Sesma, & Williamson, 2001; Evans & Davies, 1997; Smith & Mosby, 2003). Every child has his/her place and do not belong in the adult realm.

In the Caribbean parents and children play very distinctive roles in the family. Children are expected to take on more chores and responsibilities at a much younger age than what some American children are accustomed to (Bagely et al., 1975). Girls are expected to help around the household, more so than boys, who are allowed more freedoms to go outside of the home away from “girl’s work” (Brown & Johnson, 2008). As boys become older they have fewer and fewer chores that they have to accomplish (Brown & Johnson, 2008), but girls have the same or more. If there are younger siblings, older girls are expected to take on the mother role when needed (Lopez, 2002), this is something that is expected outside of regular chores (Dubrow & Pena, 2001). Girls are monitored very closely in order to protect them from negative outside influences and boys are often granted more lenience, but punished harsher than girls (Brown & Johnson, 2008; Fox, Wilson & Wilson, 2002).
The use of corporal punishment among Caribbean parents is frequent and comes against a lot of criticism once it is used in America (Baptiste, Hardy & Lewis, 1997; Roopnarine & Brown, 1997). Afro-Caribbean immigrant parents frequently complain about the loss of power over their children, and do not understand how they are supposed to control them (Baptiste et al., 1997; Evans & Davies, 1997; Baptiste, 2005) without corporal punishment. This becomes more problematic for Caribbean parents as the child becomes more acculturated into the American culture (Waters, 2001). Since corporal punishment is seen as a part of being a good parent in Caribbean culture, parents often feel at a loss once they are restricted from it (Cournyer, Kean & Rohner, 1991). Some parents are charged with child abuse and neglect for punishments that would be normal in their native countries (Smith & Mosby, 2003). Caribbean immigrants often believe that child service agencies are against them and only work towards giving children more power and control over the parent themselves (Evans & Davies, 1997).

Respect is also very important and essential in the Caribbean parent-child dynamic (Gopaul-McNicol, 1993). Children must respect their parents regardless of what they do or say. As children become more acculturated and adopt the American ideals of independence and self-sufficiency; they can come into a lot of conflict with their parents and parental expectations.

**Caribbean Second Generation and Acculturation**

According to John Berry (2005) there are two processes that acculturating people have to face within their host societies; maintaining their cultural heritage and traditions, or forming a relationship with their host societies. Within these processes there are four acculturation categories that can be formed: Assimilation, when individuals abandon their native culture and take on the norms of the dominant culture; Integration, accepting customs of the host culture while preserving one’s own culture; Separation, maintaining their own culture and rejecting the host culture; and lastly Marginalization, the rejection of native culture and host culture. These categories of acculturation are not merely by choice, but also depend on the acceptance or rejection by the host culture, especially when looking at integration.

For Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the United States, the assimilation category of acculturation does not only refer to climbing the ladder to the middle class, but it also refers to becoming a black American, traditionally one of the most oppressed groups in American history.
(Waters, 2001). The added weight of being a minority within a minority pushes this immigrant group farther down on the American white/black race scale (Lopez, 2002). Coming from a country where African descent more or less falls into the majority, this new system of having communities that are distinguished by race and low expectations for success comes as a shock to many Caribbean immigrants (Mathews & Mahoney, 2005).

How a child acculturates to American society can play a big part on who they choose to associate themselves with, their self esteem and what lies ahead of them (Johnson, 2007). Children whose parents settle in the inner city are more susceptible to deviant lifestyles that are encouraged by their peers and or the environment in general, such as gangs, drugs, and dropping out of school (Mathews & Mahoney, 2005; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly & Halley, 2005). There is also the constant pull to become American, which follows the fear of many Caribbean parents of their child becoming African Americans, and never moving up to the middle class (Johnson, 2007; Portes & Zhou, 1994).

Immigrant children experience conflicts when trying to adapt to their surroundings and trying to live up to their parents’ cultural expectations (Portes & Zhou, 1994). Parents expect them to succeed in education and move up to the middle class, all while maintaining the culture and traditions that are expected from their homeland (Hilaire, 2006; Portes et al., 2005). This follows the concept of Integration, which is dependent on the acceptance of the host culture to the foreign traditions (Berry, 2005). Conflict arises when these children, mostly during adolescence, are becoming more involved in the American culture and less entwined in their parents culture (Smokowski, 2008; Sciarra, 1999), leaning towards assimilation.

Second generation children often provide a pathway between Caribbean parents and the U.S. culture. They are given the responsibility to interpret meaning for their parents and often to mediate between them and American society (Mathews & Mahoney, 2005). Children are faced with the reversed role of parenting their parents and representing them to the rest of society. This causes stress on children and may cause them to ultimately rebel against their parents. Parents can also become victims of manipulation by their children. This can cause further assimilation for the child or even marginalization of the parent.
**Mother Daughter Conflict**

There has been a higher rate of Afro-Caribbean women than men migrating to the U.S., which relates to a higher rate of single mothers in the Caribbean population (Lopez, 2002). This situation increases responsibilities for female children, since they are responsible for helping in the home with or without their mothers (Lopez, 2002). When you combine strict parenting and lack of autonomy (deemed appropriate for their American peers), the second generation daughters are faced with more conflict than their male counterparts (Waters, 2001). With the pull and tug of society telling them who they should be, girls are also faced with the duty to please their parents, but unlike boys, second generation girls are more likely not to go against their parents (Kaplan, Turner & Badger, 2007).

Immigrant mothers become stricter in order to protect their daughters from the negative influences of the society around them (Brown & Johnson, 1995; Desai & Gooden, 2008). This protective strategy is also seen among many Asian and Latino mothers, such as those who decide to change their children’s names to sound more American in order for them to fit in more in school (Souto-Manning, 2007). Caribbean mothers are unable to fully protect their children, but becoming stricter helps parents to maintain control (Deaux et al, 2007).

In addition to strict parental control, Afro-Caribbean immigrant mothers also have high expectations for their second generation daughters. In a study of Adult daughters of aging immigrant women, many daughters felt that their mothers had preconceived notions and plans of their futures (Duboise & Usita 2005). Caribbean mothers express wanting better outcomes for their daughter than they themselves were able to have (Brown & Johnson, 2008). These mothers often use guilt, such as mentioning sacrifices made for daughters, and not being able to fulfill their own dreams.

**Theoretical Framework**

According to Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977), the ecology of human development is the study of the growing human organism and the environment that it lives in. It also looks at the interaction within these environments and how they affect one another. Four systems of the ecological environment is used for this study: the Micro system, which looks at the immediate surroundings of a person (e.g. school, home) and their role in that setting (daughter, student); the
Chronosystem looks at the changes that one goes through, during a certain point in their life and how that relates to individual development; Exosystem, which looks at those things that do not directly affect the person but affects the settings around the person (e.g. neighborhood, government agencies); and lastly the Macrosystem looks at the overall institutional patterns that form the previous systems (e.g. social, political system, culture or subculture).

Ecological theory is used to guide the current study by focusing on the relationship between mother and daughter and how they affect one another in the micro system. The Chronosystem is used to look at the mother and daughter during different stages in their life to determine how their relationship has changed or stayed the same over time. Exosystem identifies if living in an inner city area has any effect on the development of the Caribbean mother-daughter relationship and maternal expectations of the daughter. The Macrosystem helps to identify the cultural differences of the American society verses the Caribbean origin of the mother, and how that affects the mother-daughter relationship. Using Ecology theory with concepts of Acculturation helps to emphasize how the micro, chrono, exo, and macro levels interact together to form outcomes for second generation children and their immigrant families (Johnson, 2007). How second generation Caribbean daughters and their mothers acculturate to society has a sizable affect on how they interact within the various systems outline by ecological theory (Johnson, 2007).

Methods

Sample

The sample consisted of five mothers and four daughters (unrelated, not mother-daughter pairs). Mothers ranged from the ages of 40-71. Daughters ranged from the ages of 18-27. All women are of Afro-Caribbean descent. All mothers and daughters lived in Brooklyn, New York. All mothers raised their daughters alone and all daughters were unmarried. Mothers resided in America for 26-42 years.

Procedure

All Participants were recruited through posters that were distributed to various churches and Caribbean agencies in the Brooklyn area. Various groups (churches, agencies, etc.) were spoken to and asked for participant involvement. A snowball sampling strategy was also used, as participants were asked to refer any friends to the study that met the criteria for participation.
Each mother and each daughter participated in an individual interview lasting approximately 1-2 hours (See Interview Guide Appendix A & B). Each participant was asked to sign a consent form (Appendix C), before the interview. Interviews took place in various churches, and agencies in Brooklyn, each interview session took place in a private room with only the investigator and participant present. Interviews were audio recorded.

This study was approved by the Miami University Internal Review Board. A consent form (Appendix C) was given to all participants before each interview. The consent process consisted of reading and discussing the consent form with each participant. The discussion ensured that they understood their rights and the purpose of the study. They were asked to sign the consent form, giving permission to record the interview, confirming that they were at least 18 years of age, and agreeing to be a part of the study. The principal investigator was solely responsible for conducting and transcribing each interview. Participation was confidential. Each participant was given an ID number and a pseudonym to help maintain confidentiality.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

The analysis followed an emic perspective; all accounts are taken from people within the Caribbean culture. This will give the research the perspective of the women in the study, rather than my own. An inductive approach and line by line coding was implemented to analyze the qualitative data. A word from the line was used to establish a code to represent it.

Example Quote: “There is a lot of crime and drugs where I live”

Example Code: *Crime and Drugs*

If a word from the line could not be used as a code then the general idea of the quote was used as a code.

Example Quote: “I have four sisters, and we are all very close, we get along well together.”

Example Code: *Family Relationships*

If a line could not be understood clearly then a few sentences were used in order to develop a code.
Example: “My fears about her is that she is going to drop out of high school, and it going to take her forever like it took me to get herself together, but she will eventually cus I keep talking the same thing over and over and over, so one day, and as she watch the other two, something will rub off on her.”

Example Code: Mothers Fears

After all transcripts were coded, all codes were gathered into themes. In order to be a relevant theme for this particular research the codes had to be reoccurring with at least three of the five mothers, two of the four daughters or four of the nine women interviewed.

Example:

Findings
Over 400 codes were identified during the data analysis. There were 35 themes extracted from these codes. From these we will focus on the nine that are most relevant to the current study.

Caribbean Culture in Brooklyn

All participants (n= 9) lived in Brooklyn, New York. Mothers (n=3) perceived their neighborhoods as having a very dominant Caribbean presence. Trinidadian Mother, Joyce describes why she likes her neighborhood:

I feel safe in the area and that’s the most important thing, you have to feel safe in the area that you live in, ya know? Most of the things I like about this area, the safety and you know they have a lot of people from your culture that live in the area.

Trinidadian Mother, Lady D describes the diversity of her neighborhood:
The way Brooklyn is now...you are going to have Americans who are married to some west Indians. You are not going to find a true my mother and my father is from America... you are going to find my mother is from America my father is from Trinidad, or my father is from Puerto Rico or my father is from Guyana, it’s a diverse culture right now.

Mother, Phylis was born in Antigua, and describes the changes that she has seen in Brooklyn over the forty years that she has lived there:

When I first came here the Caucasian Americans didn’t know much about the Caribbean except for Jamaica or Trinidad, those are the only two islands that they knew. Coming from Antigua, which is a very small island, when you say Antigua they say Montego Bay? And I say nooo. [they ask] Is it in Jamaica? And I say nooo. I am seeing the Caribbean culture expand where people can identify the islands as separate governments rather than every island came out of Jamaica or it came out of Trinidad, and many people didn’t even know Trinidad they mostly knew Jamaica. I like to see the change and to help educate.

Brooklyn became the central focus of Caribbean culture because everybody settled in Brooklyn. Generations ago, maybe the first person that came to that family came to Brooklyn so families just came and followed. Brooklyn became the wider area of where Caribbean people would settle.

Mothers Negative Perceptions of Americans

Mothers (n=4) showed disdain for Americans through stories from the past and the present. Guyanese mother Desiree remembers her first thoughts about Americans when she came to the country, “In my mind Americans were just nasty people. We just didn’t hang with the Americans there was something wrong with hanging with Americans in high school.”

Mother Joyce also reflects on being a new immigrant from Trinidad, “They [Americans] would make jokes and say for us to go back to our country on a banana boat. We came on an airplane; my perception is that they were lacking information about other countries.”

Guyanese Mother Aunty D believed that Americans hated West Indians:

I believe the reason for that is, as west Indians we were very hardworking, we went out and we wanted our own, ya know, and the Americans they were lazy and so on...Most West Indians they went out and they fought for their own and even now, up to today,
you find a lot of Americans still being … they don’t really like the west Indian. The ones who are truly so called American they don’t like west Indians because we have a tendency of going forward to get what we want, we were brought up in a certain way and you had to go on and your education was very important to you and so on…

Antiguan mother Phylis remembers the negative comments made about her accent:

One of them [an American] said to me, well you know that when you are living in this country you have to speak like an American, and I said well if I recall America doesn’t have a national language for one, and two since you can understand me clearly there is no reason to change the way I talk. If you have difficulty understanding me then there is room for consideration.

**Parenting in America vs. Parenting in Caribbean**

Mothers perceived Caribbean parenting as a positive way of raising children (n=5). Guyanese Mother Desiree expresses her views on parenting, “Parenting in Guyana was more with a purpose and a vision, in terms of raising your children right and parents doing what they know is best at the time.” Phyllis, who was born in Antigua, came to America to attend college. She goes on to say, “…from the Caribbean perspective I think that is something that we do know how to do very well, we know how to organize, we know how to structure, we know how to process ourselves to be successful”

Joyce compares her childhood experiences growing up in Trinidad to what she sees with the children in America:

Well the parenting here was a little different. The children, some of them, have more leeway with the parent. I’m not saying there was a difference, but there was a difference in the way you were brought up. My parents brought me up this way [strict] and I was able to bring up my daughter… I wanted her to feel free…don’t have the fear but still to be careful, ya know.
Guyanese mother Seneca shares her opinion of raising children in America, “The child has to be a part of the family. As I said I believe in tough love. These (American) children are over indulged.”

Trinidadian mother Lady D reflects on how she raised her own daughter:

I am so happy to say that my Caribbean upbringing has done nothing but given my daughter a positive outlook on life. I truly hope that she will remember that she has come from her grandmother, and her great-grandmother. She didn’t know her great-grandmother, but she knows her grandmother and the culture she has.

**Lack of Family Support (Childcare)**

Mothers (n=3) expressed the difficulty of not having family in America who could help them raise their daughters. Trinidadian mother Joyce describes her struggles while trying to get used to this:

…the most difficult thing is that ummm…you see in your country even your neighbor, everybody around is like family, you feel safe, if you have to run out you drop off your child or so. But with parenting here it was the babysitter, umm…you have to work, the father have to work and after school it was like in a daze, dropping her off to ummm…school rushing..I would say ummm… raising the kids you have to have a lot of supportive system, I had supportive system but there are times when everybody that you could call is not around, they have to work or they have to be someplace.

Guyanese native Seneca reflects on her similar experience, being a single parent in a different country made it difficult for her to find childcare:

“When I was in school, it was difficult. But her father pitched in. He would pick her up and keep her. And when we moved to Bedsty, I had cousins living around the corner. It worked, but she reached the point where she would say that she didn’t want to be in anybody’s house and that, I was worried about, because I couldn’t let her do that. Now a days, your child gets sick and you can take off of work, but you couldn’t do that back
then. And she was always having a cold and problems and stuff. So that was kind of difficult trying to care for her.”

Lady D followed Trinidadian customs and depended on her mother to help her with child-care. She reflects on how difficult it was to raise her daughter and maintain work after her mother’s death, “It was about work and it was about getting paid and it was about going on vacation and doing all kinds of fun things (with my daughter), but now, for my mom not being here I am not working in the bank anymore. I got burned out.”

**Using discipline in child rearing**

Discipline in child rearing was a theme expressed in mothers (n=4) and daughters (n=3) interviews. Mothers saw using discipline as a viable way of raising their daughters. As described below by Antiguan mother Phyllis:

American standards think that we are too harsh. In their eyes it appears as though we are abusive. We come out of a colonialist background where discipline is the order of the day and children will not challenge parents in any respect but parents are there to teach their children. They are there to instill discipline into the child so that the child understands that it is for their best that this is done. The variations that America gives the child, I think, is too lenient from the Caribbean perspective. We are not that lenient, there are just some rules we are not going to allow you to break… why?...because you are too young to see the destruction therefore you can not make that determination by virtue of your age, so therefore those rules cannot be broken. At some point you are going to break them but this moment you have to abide by those rules.

Guyanese mother Desiree, reflects on her struggle with parenting:

…when I came here and I grew up and stuff I felt like we were abused as kids. Cus I have marks still on my skin from beatings. So I think I laxed [sic] a little bit. Cus as I said, when I had my kids originally, I was financially ready for children; I wasn’t emotionally ready for children. So I don’t think in the first 5 or six years of all three of my children’s life, that I did a good job of laying down certain foundations. Like what was instilled in
me. I don’t think I did a good job instilling that in them. I think they got the American values.

Caribbean parents express confusion when trying to understand American discipline. Often parents become involved with the child welfare system when using corporal punishment to discipline their children (Johnson, 2007). Phylis continues to explain this:

The American system tells the child that your parents can not hit you or the parent can’t punish you with hitting because it is abuse and then you can call the police and the police can reprimand your parent in front of you the child, you are actually telling the child you don’t have to respect your parent, and I think that there should be some justifiable way…

Trinidadian mother Lady D believes that discipline is created through children having fear for their parents:

…Umm parenting to me is very important thing. You cannot be your child’s friend. No let’s put it this way. Your child, some people may think I’m wrong but, as a parent your child should always have a fear for you. I don’t care what nobody says. Because if they go to do something and they are like “Oh God my mother is going to kill me or my father is going to kill me”, that tends to stop them. If they don’t have a fear of you, they will go right through it. And then, you know, you are going to have to take care of the situation after. But as a parent your child has to have a fear of you. They have to have it.

Trinidadian Mother Joyce also shares her perspectives on discipline:

I consider myself strict in a sense with my daughter to a certain point in bringing her up because children know how to manipulate parents. If I say she couldn’t do something or go somewhere, I explain to her the reason. I tell her what she could not do or where she could not go.

Daughter Jasmine, describes her frustration with her mother’s strict rules:

When me and my friends want to go out I have to tell them I can’t right now can you come back in like two hours I have to clean up...and they are like can you clean up when you get back…no...You don’t know my mother...your mother may be Spanish or
wherever but no this is a totally different thing, when my mother says something you have to do it. She will not change her mind for nothing that’s just how it is.

Daughter Sofia explains how she began to understand her mother’s over-protective approach to discipline:

Well everybody knew my mom was strict. Some parents would say that my mom is protective of me. I do think she was very protective of me but I understand now. I think that she was doing it for a reason. Some things that I wasn’t aware of she tried to keep me unaware of them so I would reach a certain point where I would be mature enough to handle it.

Daughter Tanya describes how she felt growing up in a Caribbean household, “I would have to say that it was quite strict ummm…because my mother she is very hard on us... So I would say it was strict and it was kind of stern.”

**Importance of education**

Mothers (n=3) strongly believed that it was important their children received a good education. Daughters (n=2) also reiterated how their mothers stressed the importance of education. Guyanese mother Seneca told her daughter, “…the thing was just you don’t get pregnant you have to get a degree, you have to. “

Antiguan mother Phyllis believed that education was the only way that her daughter could succeed:

College was a must, there was no such ting [sic] as not going on to further your education that was instilled at two. Believe it or not at two, I told her, you will go to college, it is just not acceptable for you not to. That was a forborne conclusion and through stages of growth that was instilled. Your highest achievement as a child is to complete your education to the fullest degree and after that you choose what you want to do.

Trinidadian mother Joyce continues to say, “…because I know that sometimes friends can lead you sometimes down the wrong path so that I try to instill in her when she get her education she will be free to do a lot of things that she couldn’t do when she was coming up.”
Daughter Tanya remembers her mother’s strict policies on education:

   My mother was very strict on education and she wanted us to be the best that we can in anything that we do. If we came home and we didn’t do as well, she would try to push us to do better so that next time when we come we would do much better and be ok with it. She was very strict she never wanted anybody to give up.

Daughter Sofia’s mother strongly believed in the importance of education:

   ... they would always tell me you see where we came from you know why we are here in this country to take advantage of the opportunities, so don’t lose that, take advantage of everything that you can take advantage of that was her basically her view or don’t take anything for granted you are not entitled to things you should work for what you want and you will accomplish whatever you want in life.

**Daughter’s Rebellion towards Caribbean traditions**

   The rebellion theme was found among some daughters (n=3). Daughters expressed some negative thoughts about Caribbean traditions being used in America. Daughter Jasmine expresses her frustration, “my grandmother didn’t allow them [her children] to sleep over peoples house. So she’s like no this family we don’t do that or whatever and I’m just like that’s pointless…”

Daughter Tanya says:

   …being a teenager I was never allowed to hang out with my friends, I was told that I was a young lady and being a young lady you don’t…ladies don’t run the streets. The thing is you want to hang out and do what the other kids are doing, that was the hardest. I was always told oh I couldn’t do certain things. I like to play basketball with the boys and I was always told oh that’s not how a young lady should do, I was like really upset when my brother could do things or stay out later and I said why can he stay out later and they said because he is a boy and you are a girl and girls should act like ladies. I hated that cus [sic] it was the whole thing with being traditional. Girls act like ladies and do certain things you know? They were too traditional for me.

Daughter Sofia describes how she felt about her mother’s excessive fear of crime in America:
They would watch things on the news and they would always be very fearful. Like you know kidnappers or violence you would always be …tell me to be more aware of my surroundings or don’t go here don’t do this because they viewed it like this country is not back home, you could walk freely and leave your doors open and not worry about anyone trying to harm you, that was the only thing she was more fearful than other parents she really sheltered me more than I thought American parents would because she was always fearful about the crime in New York or crazy people in New York. It was the only thing I disliked.

**Mother’s Perceptions of Daughter’s Parenting**

Mothers (n=3) reflect on their disapproval with their daughters’ parenting practices. Guyanese mother Seneca who now lives with her daughter and granddaughter explains her disapproval with her daughters parenting:

I think she [daughter] spoils her [granddaughter] too much. She just gives, gives, gives. You know and I try to tell her [granddaughter], she’s eight now, and I tell her, when I was your age I had to look over my brothers and sisters, so you have to be more responsible. And you know, I guess it’s a different time. It’s just play now. They aren’t serious about anything. Not responsible, not hanging up their clothes, you know little things. But I think she [daughter] gives her too much.

Antiguan mother Phylis experiences similar conflicts with her daughter’s parenting practices:

…my daughter was first generation American, her children are second generation. She feels that there are a lot of things that she is not in agreement with me, because of my strict…no I won’t say strict… my strong beliefs. She feels like a lot of it is too harsh and she feels that she would like… she will loosen some of that some of those reigns. As I see it there is a positive and a negative to that, you loosen it in one way but in another way you are running into difficulties. So… and I’ve asked her this…which is really the best way?
Being a young mother, Desiree remembers her own mother’s disapproval with her parenting methods, “I remember saying…[Creole] lef’ di chile don’t be beatin’ he let he knock down wha’ he want, and I gon’[sic] clean it up…”

**Daughters Love of Caribbean Culture**

Daughters (n=3) showed pride for Caribbean culture and for their countries of origin.

Sofia expresses her appreciation of her Barbadian culture:

I think it’s fabulous, I’m glad I have another culture that I can lean back on. A lot of people say you can’t go somewhere if you don’t know where you have come from and I think its helped me a lot in different perspectives. The culture itself is fabulous I love having the west Indian culture, and talking to people in a different dialect its fabulous! Even the music! Going back to Barbados and seeing where my mom was born and just knowing you know your heritage is amazing.

Daughter Jasmine reflects on her Trinidadian background:

I loved it you just learn so much opposed to like straight up American because you understand the difference of having a nationality and a race, and you are able to do different foods and listen to different music and you’re not small minded, you are just open to a lot of things.

Daughter Tanya reflects on her Grenadian upbringing, “Caribbean beliefs and customs include going to church, doing the right thing. Being respectful towards your mother and your father. Umm doing what’s right not what’s wrong and you know just basically being a good person all around.”

**Discussion**

This study was conducted using a Grounded Theory approach guided by Ecological Theoretical ideals. Five Caribbean born mothers and four American born daughters of Afro-Caribbean descent were interviewed in order to identify how Acculturation affects Afro-Caribbean mother-daughter relationships. Interviews were meant to capture the perspectives of
these women in order to gain a better understanding of how mothers and daughters cope during the acculturation process.

Ecological theory is used to explain the Acculturation process of mothers and daughters in this study. This theory looks at the outside systems of society that directly and indirectly affects the family system (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). In this case we examined the New York borough of Brooklyn, which has a large population of Caribbean immigrants (US Census 2002). When immigrants move to a new country, cultures interact, and immigrants typically take on some characteristics of the dominant culture (Berry, 2005), but in this case the present culture where participants resided was also predominantly Caribbean. These enclaves or predominantly immigrant communities are usually formed in order to preserve and maintain ones culture within the dominant host culture (Chaney, 2010). Mothers and daughters lived very close to other people of Caribbean origin and had easy access to Caribbean foods and other forms of Caribbean culture.

Most mothers (n=4) reported having negative experiences with American people. Americans were perceived as having very little knowledge about Caribbean people or any other culture other than their own. Mothers felt that Americans disregarded them because of their culture and refused to accept American norms. Most mothers fell into the Separation model of the Acculturation process and stayed within their own Caribbean community which also explains the need to stay within their Caribbean enclave. Although most mothers interacted with Americans on a daily basis, the majority of their friends and outside activities were of a Caribbean nature.

According to Lopez (2002), there is a high rate of single Caribbean mothers migrating to America. All mothers interviewed were single while raising their daughters. Childcare was a major concern for mothers (n =3). In Caribbean culture childcare is often provided by other family members or friends living in close range. Mothers expressed frustrations as they tried to provide for their daughters while trying to seek adequate care. Both mothers and daughters had a strong sense of familism. Daughters (n=3) expressed having a strong tie to their families, this bond may be the reason why there is a low report of deviant behavior among participant daughters as they strive to please their families (c.f., Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003).
Mothers saw a Caribbean upbringing as the only successful way to raise a child. Mothers believed that American forms of parenting gave more power to children over their parents and disapproved of it (Evans & Davies, 1997). Instilling Caribbean culture was the only way to raise a successful and prosperous child. Consistent with previous research (Baptiste, 2005), parents disagreed with the values taught to American children that were different than those taught in their home countries. All mothers saw American children as having no respect for their parents and as being deviant to authority. Mothers were afraid that their children would become Americanized and forget their culture all together (Zhou, 1997).

All mothers’ expressed the importance of corporal punishment in child rearing. Beatings were frequent in participant’s parenting practices. The term “beating” was used to describe a degree of physical punishment that ranged from a light spanking to harsher forms of hitting. Most mothers (n=4) referred to a milder form of beating. Although seen as harmful to children by American society (Baptiste, Hardy & Lewis, 1997; Roopnarine & Brown, 1997), beatings are seen as an appropriate form of punishment in Caribbean culture and also an attribute of good parenting (Rohner, Kean & Couryner, 1991).

All Daughters (n=4) did not agree with some of the ways that they were raised. They felt they were overprotected and restricted from doing simple things that their peers were permitted to engage in. Since daughters tended to lean more towards integrating into American society and mothers towards separation from it, daughters often felt frustrated at not being able to do these things. Mothers expressed fear of their daughters getting hurt when hanging out in the streets and often became stricter because of this (Brown & Johnson, 1995, Desai & Gooden 208).

Education was highly valued by most Caribbean born mothers (n=4) and American Daughters (n=3). Mothers wanted their daughters to get the best education possible in order to be successful in life. They expressed wanting better outcomes for their children’s lives and education being the key to this (Brown, Johnson 2008). Education is the path that will ultimately lead their children to economic mobility (Portes, Zhou 1994). All daughters interviewed were pursuing some sort of higher education with the support of their mothers.

Daughters appreciated their Caribbean ancestry and expressed feeling pride in knowing where they came from. Daughters saw themselves as American but did not lose their Caribbean identities. American born children’s Caribbean ancestry often overshadows their place of
residence (Reynolds, 2006). Daughters were fully immersed in Caribbean traditions and customs. They saw their Caribbean heritage as something that made them better in their adult life. Although daughters expressed some difficulty in understanding their mothers’ way of parenting, they did not abandon their culture. Daughters integrated, taking in American customs and attributes while maintaining and preserving their Caribbean background.

**Conclusion**

The limitations of this study must be recognized. Due to the small sample size and use of multiple Caribbean countries, the study does not reflect the views of all persons of Caribbean descent. Mothers and daughters were not related. It was very difficult to recruit mother-daughter dyads to participant because of participant’s beliefs in privacy and the unwillingness to involve their own mothers or daughters. Having matched pairs would more effectively capture the mother/daughter experience. The current findings show the need for a more in depth study of the Caribbean family dynamic and show the complexities of the West Indian culture.

This study attempted to identify the affect of acculturation on the Afro Caribbean mother-daughter relationship. Through qualitative exploration we see that daughters and mothers are still very involved in their Caribbean culture. Even though daughters expressed frustration at times they still openly communicated with their mothers and followed certain traditions when necessary. I conclude that living in an enclave that has such a dense population of Caribbean people, like Brooklyn has slowed the acculturation process of both mother and daughter. The process of assimilation can only occur when there is adequate exposure to the host society (Berry, 2005), living in an enclave has limited this exposure.

More research on authoritarian discipline and its affect on Caribbean children is needed. Understanding Caribbean culture will help social service agencies to better serve such populations in America. More and more Caribbean American children are becoming involved in the child welfare system and it is important for providers to become aware of the different cultural backgrounds of their population. Knowing that a child may appear African American but have a family that isn’t American can help to better understand and properly serve them. Understanding the cultural dynamic of the families in the communities that are served will help to foster progress within those families.
REFERENCES


Appendix A: Interview Guide for Mothers

Thank you for participating in this study. I would like to learn more about your experience as a Caribbean mother raising a daughter in the United States. There is little research out there about this particular relationship within the context of the United States, and I would like to share your story in order for others to better understand the Caribbean mother experience. Feel free to not answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. We can discontinue this interview at anytime, at your request. If this interview brings up any unwanted feelings please let me know and I will provide you with a list of resources that can provide you with further help or someone to talk to.

Pseudonym________________________

I.D.________________________________

Birth Date_________________________

Country of Origin____________________

Ethnicity___________________________

How Long in America_________________
Interview Guide

**Your Experience.**

1. Why did you come to America?
   a. Probes
      i. Have you always wanted to come to this country? If yes, why did you want to come – If No, why did you come?
      ii. What were your aspirations for yourself?
      iii. Did you come by yourself? If no, who came with you. If yes how did you feel about coming to a strange country by yourself

2. Can you remember your first year in America?
   a. Probes
      i. Where did you stay?
      ii. What was America like when you first got here? Was it what you expected? How so?
      iii. What surprised you most about the country?
      iv. Who did you stay with, if alone how did that feel? If with someone else how did you adjust?
      v. What where your perceptions about the Americans that you met?
      vi. How did you adjust? ?
      vii. Did you ever regret coming?
viii. What experiences have changed/not changed your opinion of America
ix. How is your life different from when you first arrived?

3. What is your perception of the neighborhood that you live in?
   a. Probes
      i. What do you like least about it
      ii. What do you like the most about it?
      iii. What would you change about your neighborhood?
      iv. How would you describe your neighborhood as far as safety?
         1. Describe any supportive relationships that you might have.
         2. Family
         3. Friends
         4. Agencies?

Your Daughter

1. Describe your present relationship with your daughter
   a. Probes
      i. How was your pregnancy/ new mom experience
         1. What were your expectations?
         2. Fears?

2. Tell me about your approach to parenting
   a. Probes
      i. How were you raised?
         1. Two parent/single parent
         2. Where they strict?
      ii. How did this effect how you raised your children
      iii. Do you consider yourself strict, lenient or somewhere in the middle?
      iv. What was the most difficult thing about parenting in America?
      v. How would you compare it to parenting in your native country?

3. What are your perceptions of children’s role in the family?
   a. Probes
      i. Girl children?
      ii. Boy children?

4. What were some of the major conflicts that you faced in your relationship with your daughter?
   a. Probes
      i. How did you perceive your daughters behavior?
      ii. What were some things that you did to cope if her behavior upset you
      iii. How did you feel
      iv. What do you think caused the conflict?
v. Peers?
5. How did you instill your culture in your daughter?
   a. Probes
      i. How did she respond to this?
6. Did the American culture effect your relationship with your daughter?
   a. Probes
      i. How?
      ii. How did you handle it?
      iii. How did you feel about her peers
      iv. surroundings
Appendix B: Interview Guide for Daughters

Thank you for Participating in this study. I would like to learn more about your experience as an American born daughter being raised by a Caribbean mother. There is little research out there about this particular Caribbean/American experience, and I would like to share your story in order for others to better understand the American born daughters’ experience. Feel free to not answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. We can discontinue this interview at anytime, at your request. If this interview brings up any unwanted feelings please let me know and I will provide you with a list of resources that can provide you with further help or someone to talk to.

Pseudonym_________________________

I.D.________________________________

Birth Date__________________________

Country of Origin____________________

Ethnicity____________________________

How Long in America__________________

Occupation__________________________
Annual income_________________________

Number of children in household you grew up in_________

How many people are living in your current household including yourself?___________________

Highest level of education____________________

**Interview Guide**

**Your Experience**

1. What was it like growing up in a Caribbean-American household?
   - Probes
     1. Describe your household
     2. What did you enjoy about it?
     3. What did you dislike about it?

2. What do you know about Caribbean culture?
   - Probes
     1. What do you like about it?
     2. What do you dislike about it
     3. Was Caribbean culture incorporated into your household, if yes, how so?

3. What was the most difficult thing that you had to deal with as a teenager in relation to your Caribbean culture vs. American Culture.
   - Probes
     1. How did your peers handle your Caribbean culture
        1. If positive:
           1. How did they support you
           2. Did they get involved with any cultural activities
        2. If negative:
4. How do you identify yourself?
   a. Probes
      i. E.g. Black, West Indian, African American, Caribbean?
      ii. How does your mother view black Americans?
      iii. How do you view black Americans?
      iv. How do you view white Americans?
      v. How do you view the group that you identify with?

Your Mother

1. Describe your present relationship with your mother.
   a. Probes
      i. How do you get along?
      ii. How is she involved in your life?
         1. Positive?
         2. Negative?

2. Explain your mother's parenting style
   i. probes
      ii. Was she strict, how so?
      iii. How did you feel about your mother's parenting style?
      iv. How did it affect your relationship with your mother?
Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent to participate in interview for Research Participants:

A Study of Acculturation and its affect on Afro-Caribbean Mother Daughter Relationships

Principal Investigator: Bertranna Alero Abrams

Major Advisor: Dr. Kevin Bush

Title: A Study of Acculturation and its effect on Afro-Caribbean Mother Daughter Relationships

My name is Bertranna Alero Abrams, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Family Studies and Social work Program at Miami University. I am inviting you to participate in a research project that will examine the experiences of Caribbean mothers and their American born daughters in inner city America.

The principal objective of this study is to discover how mothers and daughters interact in American society in an inner city environment while trying to uphold Caribbean traditions. Please understand that your participation in the interview is 100% voluntary, you may stop the interview or refuse to answer any questions at any time during the interview. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a 1-2 hour interview with me.

Participants will be given a gift and will be entered into a raffle that will yield two winners of two fifty dollar visa gift cards. Both mother and daughter will be allowed to enter the raffle and receive a gift. Participants who do not finish the interview will still receive a gift, but will not be able to participate in the raffle.

Participation in this is study is confidential. Your name or other identifying information will not be connected to the information you provide. The only cases where confidentiality might be broken are in situations involving harm to self or others, such as child abuse.

Please understand that the researcher does not anticipate any negative effects for participants.

Please sign below if you understand ALL of the following: the interview is completely voluntary, your participation and the information you provide is confidential, and that your responses will only be accessed by the principal investigator (myself) and my faculty advisor(s), the interview will be taped for coding purposes, the study is not intended to help you personally, but to contribute more knowledge about the study of the Caribbean family. However you may enjoy thinking about and responding to interview questions, you reserve the right to withdrawal your participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact me, Bertranna (Ber-tranna) Abrams (513) 461-3336, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Kevin Bush (513) 529-0405. For questions and concerns regarding
If you do not have any questions at this point and are interesting in participating in this study please sign the bottom of this form. Please keep the copy of this form for your records

Participant Name: ______________________________

Participant Signature: ___________________
The principal objective of this study is to discover how mothers and daughters interact in American society in an inner city environment while trying to uphold Caribbean traditions. I am looking for Mothers ages 35-75 and daughters ages 18-55. All mothers are required to be born in a Caribbean country. All Daughters will be required to be born in America. Please understand that your participation in the interview is 100% voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a 1-2 hour interview with me. Participants will be given a gift and will be entered into a raffle that will yield two winners of two fifty dollar visa gift cards! Both mother and daughter will be allowed to enter the raffle and receive a gift.
Appendix E: Resources

RAPE CRISIS SERVICES

CAMBA

885 Flatbush Avenue
3rd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11226
1800-310-2449

FAMILY COUNSELING SERVICES

Goodman-Herrick, P, ND, DHANP

601 6th St. Brooklyn, NY 11215

(718) 768-5445

OTHER

Caribbean Women’s Health Association:

Nutrition - Carolyn Petillo 718-940-9501 cpetillo@cwha.org
Immigration (718-826-2942 ext. 18 Sonia Agront - sagront@cwha.org
HIV/ AIDS Andrea Blair-Dawson (718) 826-2942 ext. 51 abdawson@cwha.org
Health Insurance Enrollment - Vielka Maynard (718) 826-2942 ext. 15 vmaynard@cwha.org
Maternal Child Health - Prenatal Network and Infant Mortality Reduction Initiative-Adrienne Mercer (718)826-2942 ext. 23 amercer@cwha.org
Personnel and volunteer-chall@cwha.org
Administration -chall@cwha.org
Other questions and comments - abdawson@cwha.org