GAIL M. FERGUSON, PH.D.
Department of Human and Community Development
Faculty Affiliate, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
USA
gmfergus@illinois.edu

My scholarship lies at the intersection of cross-cultural psychology, developmental psychology, and clinical psychology, with a particular focus on the identity and well-being of Caribbean youth on the islands and in North America. My most recent line of research is based on 21st century forms of youth acculturation. First, I study Remote Acculturation among non-migrants by way of indirect and/or intermittent cultural contact with distant cultures via media, trade, communication technologies, and tourism. I also study Tridimensional Acculturation among minority immigrants in the U.S. who acculturate towards White mainstream and local minority cultures while they seek to maintain their ethnic culture. I serve on the Editorial Boards of the Caribbean Journal of Psychology and the Journal of Youth and Adolescence. The long-term goal of my research program is to better understand and promote the health and well-being of Caribbean and other Black youth across countries using culturally relevant empirical research.

Remote Acculturation in the Caribbean
Gail M. Ferguson
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

ABSTRACT: Remote acculturation – taking on cultural identity, attitudes, and behaviors of a distant culture based on indirect and/or intermittent exposure – presents a new way to understand the psychological impact of cultural globalization, especially on Caribbean youth (Ferguson, 2013). Remote acculturation has given rise to a new type of bicultural Caribbean youngster on the island who resembles Caribbean emigrants living in the United States. This panellist will introduce the concept of remote acculturation, describe Caribbean and cross-cultural research on this topic, and to discuss its implications for Caribbean youth development and well-being.

Ferguson and colleagues pioneered conceptual and empirical work on remote acculturation in the form of “Americanization” in Jamaica, where there is a heavy emphasis on U.S. tourism development (over 1 million annual U.S. tourists), coupled with the pervasiveness of U.S.-produced media. They found that 33% of urban Jamaican adolescents on the island adopt a part-American identity, American entertainment behaviors, and American family values (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012, 2015). In addition, these “Americanized” Jamaican island youth experience more parent-adolescent conflict associated with an acculturation gap. Taken together, remote
acculturation studies across countries show that “Americanization” is present in the urban Caribbean (Kingston, Jamaica) but is less prominent in rural areas (Rural Haiti) due to lower exposure to vehicles bringing in American culture (Ferguson, Desir, & Bornstein, 2013). Moreover, vehicles that transmit American culture vary based on context (differences between Caribbean and Africa). The speaker will address the generalization, limitations, and share future directions for research, practice, and policy.