

**An Exploratory Study of the Child Disciplinary Practices of Jamaican Immigrant
Parents in the United States: Implications for School Counselors**

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Abstract

Jamaican immigrant students are highly represented in U.S. public schools, primarily in regions concentrated throughout the east coast. Many of these students and their families have personal and social concerns that have implications for school counselors. In particular, scholars suggest that among this population, harsh methods of child discipline (e.g., corporal punishment) are prevalent and have ramifications for academic achievement, child abuse reporting, and socialization within the school. Few studies, however, document the disciplinary techniques of Jamaican immigrants in the United States. This exploratory study was developed to fill this gap in the literature. Results challenge prevailing assumptions about the universality of corporal punishment among Jamaican immigrants. Participants in the current study reported using a variety of disciplinary techniques and corporal punishment was not among the most used. Implications for school counselors and future research are discussed.

Keywords: child discipline, parenting, Jamaican immigrant families, counseling immigrants

An Exploratory Study of the Child Disciplinary Practices of Jamaican Immigrant Parents in the United States: Implications for School Counselors

Jamaica is one of the top 10 immigrant sending countries to the United States (McCabe, 2011). Accordingly, Jamaican immigrant students are highly represented in U.S. public schools, particularly in New York City, such as the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens (The Newest New Yorkers, 2013). High numbers of Jamaican immigrant students can also be found in cities throughout Florida, California, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia (McCabe, 2011). While the exact number of Jamaican immigrant children born to Jamaican immigrants in the United States is unknown, in 2009, approximately 1.2 million children under the age of 18 lived with at least one immigrant parent born in the Caribbean (McCabe, 2011). Since nineteen percent of all Caribbean immigrants come from Jamaica, a significant portion of these children are likely to be of Jamaican descent (McCabe, 2011). Despite relatively large populations of Jamaican immigrants in concentrated areas of United States, relevant counseling issues about this group have gone largely unexplored within the school counseling literature. Of particular interest are the child discipline practices of Jamaican immigrant parents. In Jamaica, corporal punishment is a common form of child discipline (Smith & Mosby, 2003; Smith, Springer, & Barrett, 2011) and that form of discipline has been discouraged in the United States because of its assumed detrimental effects on children's development (Straus & Pascall, 2009). In fact, the issue of child discipline has been shown to be one of the most contentious matters between immigrant parents and social service providers and one of the foremost reasons immigrant families come before the child protective authorities (Baptiste, 2005; Earner,

2007). For example, what is viewed as appropriate discipline by immigrant parents may be viewed as abusive by US authorities (Bradley, 1998a; Earner, 2007; Fontes, 2002). Fontes (2002) argued that there is no doubt that some immigrant parents engage in harsh physical punishment (such as slapping with the hands, and beating with an implement), but immigrant parents are far from homogeneous and many immigrants are “loving and devoted parents who practice traditional forms of child rearing that may include an authoritarian style and harsh corporal punishment, side by side with high levels of intimacy and support” (p. 31). As such, immigrants’ child rearing practices norms often clash with the dominant culture and may lead to professionals accusing parents of child abuse (Earner, 2007; Fontes, 2002). Situations like these have the potential to exacerbate stress and increase difficulties with child abuse reporting and socialization within the school (Bradley, 1998; Earner, 2007; Fontes, 2002). For example, misreporting of child abuse by school staff (Carter, 2011; Mitchell, 2005) may lead to conflicts between school and family (Mitchell, 2005; Waters, 1999). Moreover, several studies have indicated that although there are noted negative consequences of corporal punishment, the adverse effects may be reduced among cultures where corporal punishment is more common, such is the case in the Jamaican culture (e.g., Deater-Deckard & Dodge, 1997; Lansford, Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004). Additionally, it is important to note that there is no clear consensus on what is considered child abuse as oppose to child discipline. Therefore states may leave it up to social welfare workers or the courts to provide clarity (Laird, 2015). Laird, pointed out that many states provide a general guideline that indicates parents may use reasonable force to discipline their children. For example, New York State’ penal code 35.10 states

that parents or guardians may use physical discipline reasonably, however, 'reasonably' is open to interpretations. The literature on child discipline is scant, but it has been suggested that child discipline practices may be an important variable in the educational experiences of Jamaican immigrant students (Matthews & Mahoney, 2005). However, there is little research to verify child discipline practices, including the use of corporal punishment, among Jamaican immigrant parents in the United States. Much of what is known about this group is based on information of practices in their home country.

The empirical literature has shown that positive parenting mitigates risks (e.g., poverty, poor housing) typically associated with negative educational outcomes (Williams & Bryan, 2013; Williams, Greenleaf, Albert, & Barnes, 2014). Positive parenting also promotes resilience and healthy developmental outcomes. For this reason, authors such as Ray, Lambie, and Curry (2007) have argued that facilitating psychoeducational groups focused on parenting skills is an important role for professional school counselors. Similarly, one study (Owens, Pernice-Duca, & Thomas, 2009) identified family involvement and support for positive parenting, as one of the most critical post-training needs for practicing school counselors. As noted earlier, for some Jamaican immigrant parents, child discipline may be an especially significant aspect of parenting that needs support from school counselors and other helping professionals (Yearwood, 2001). Yet, without much research regarding the child discipline practices of this population, school counselors have little evidence on which to base the support they wish to provide to Jamaican immigrant parents.

According to Yearwood (2001), parenting (i.e., childrearing) is "historically bound, culturally organized, and responsive to meeting current environmental demands" (p. 7).

This means that parenting cannot be understood or treated apart from understanding a family's cultural norms and values. The provision of adequate, comprehensive school counseling services to Jamaican immigrant families therefore requires culturally sensitive knowledge on the part of the school counselor. The American School Counselor Association's (2010) *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* affirms this idea, stating that professional school counselors have an obligation to "stay abreast of current research and to maintain professional competence in advocacy, teaming and collaboration, [and] culturally competent counseling and school counseling program coordination..." (E.1.d). Without cultural competence, counselors may address child discipline issues based on culturally biased or false assumptions, which in turn may lead to misunderstandings between parents and well-meaning school counselors (Fontes, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the current study was to investigate the types of child discipline practices used by Jamaican immigrant parents in the United States. It is important to note that while the studies discussed above suggest that Jamaican child discipline consists of extensive use of corporal punishment, the existing body of Jamaican parenting studies has been scrutinized for its methodological and conceptual drawbacks (Carter, 2011). For example, one major criticism of that literature is that most studies have focused exclusively on physical discipline, while others have made only passing reference to other practices such as reasoning with children. Also, invariably, past studies have sampled mothers and neglected the role of fathers in the child discipline process. Furthermore, there are no studies that we are aware of that have

investigated the child disciplinary practices of Jamaican immigrants to the United States. An exception is the Yearwood (2001) study, a qualitative study that examined the goals of parenting among Jamaican immigrants but not their disciplinary practices. These methodological and conceptual limitations of the existing literature impede clarity regarding the disciplinary practices used by Jamaican immigrant parents. The study addressed some of the limitations noted, including fathers, groups other than lower socioeconomic groups, diverse disciplinary practices, and focused specifically on Jamaican immigrants.

The paper is organized thus: first, we identify the research questions used to guide the study. Second, we provide a brief review of literature which describes: (a) traditional Jamaican child discipline practices; (b) the context of Jamaican immigration to the United States; and (c) conceptual and empirical literature which theorizes the ways in which Jamaican child discipline practices may influence the educational experiences of Jamaican immigrant students and their families. Third, we describe the methods used to conduct this study. Next, we present and discuss the results of the study. Then, we discuss implications for school counselors based on these results. Finally, we conclude the paper with a discussion of the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

Research Questions

As stated earlier, there is a paucity of research documenting the child discipline practices of Jamaican immigrant parents in the United States. Therefore, the following questions were used to guide this study:

1. What types of disciplinary techniques are used by Jamaican immigrant parents and how frequently are those techniques used?

2. Do the frequency and types of disciplinary techniques that parents use vary as a function of the child's age group?
3. Do the frequency and types of disciplinary techniques used vary as a function of parental status (i.e., mother/father)?

Jamaican Child Discipline Practices

Traditionally, child discipline in Jamaica has been characterized as authoritarian, repressive, and abusive. Smith and Moore (2013) argued that in Jamaica, corporal punishment is culturally rooted and pervasive across all socio-demographic levels of society. It is considered not only pedagogically efficacious, but a religious imperative to not "spare the rod and spoil the child." The literature suggests an almost universal use of harsh corporal punishment and other violent disciplinary measures meted out to Jamaican children for even minor misbehavior such as lying, impoliteness, disobedience, crying too much, and not completing chores (Barrow, 1996). In one study (Smith, Springer, & Barrett, 2011), 78 percent of Jamaican children reported that they had received physical discipline from adults in their family. In another study (UNICEF, 2010), 89 percent of Jamaican children aged 2 to 14 years reported having experienced violent discipline (e.g., being hit) and/or psychological aggression (e.g., insults and put-downs) in the month prior to the survey. Jamaicans have relatively high use of corporal punishment, even when compared to caregivers in other countries. A global study (Lansford & Deater-Deckard, 2012) of childrearing and discipline in 24 countries showed that Jamaican caregivers registered the highest prevalence, (84%), of administering physical punishment in response to children's perceived misbehavior. Within most cultures, disciplinary techniques typically vary with child's age. Almost universally, physical punishment is more likely to be used with younger children than

with older children (UNICEF, 2010). Ricketts and Anderson (2008) reported that Jamaican caregivers tend to use physical discipline with younger children, but with adolescents, employ more verbal strategies such as arguing and quarrelling. Type of discipline used also varies by gender. Boys typically receive more frequent and severe punishment than girls (UNICEF, 2010).

Jamaican Immigration to the United States

Jamaicans immigrate to the United States for a number of reasons, including better professional, educational, and economic opportunities, but the majority immigrate for economic reasons (Glennie & Chappell, 2010). As a result, many Jamaican immigrant parents work multiple jobs to make ends meet, and consequently spend much time outside of the home (Pottinger, Stair, & Brown, 2008). Children may receive limited supervision, and if they are old enough, may be responsible for younger children (Mitchell & Bryan, 2007). In this situation, children may feel hurt and resentful, and parents may feel angry that their children are not grateful for the sacrifices they have made to provide a better life (Pottinger, Stair, & Brown, 2008).

Undoubtedly, immigration entails many social, psychological, and economic difficulties. Immigrants leave behind their homeland, family, friends, lifestyle, and value systems in a process that involves extensive disorganization, reorganization, and accommodation on the part of the immigrant (Bornstein & Bohr, 2011; Nestemk & Marks, 2011; McEvoy et al., 2005). As suggested earlier, other than acculturative stress (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2015) and racism and discrimination (Crowder & Tedrow, 2001), a particular concern that intensifies distress in the new culture is parenting and child discipline (Bornstein & Bohr, 2011). Not only must immigrant parents confront the

demands of directing their children's development in an unfamiliar context, but they must also figure out how to bridge the gaps between the culture of origin and the host culture (Baptiste, 2005; Nestemk & Marks, 2011; McEvoy et al., 2005). These processes are especially difficult when immigrants perceive a threat to their entrenched life scripts and traditional childrearing value system (Baptiste, 2005).

Potential Influence of Jamaican Child Discipline on the Educational Experience of Jamaican Immigrant Students

As indicated, there is a paucity of research on the child discipline practices of Jamaican immigrant parents in the United States. However, the prevailing assumption is that their child discipline practices are characterized by use corporal punishment. Research conducted in the United States shows a negative relationship between the use of corporal punishment and intellectual development. In their longitudinal study, Straus and Paschall (2009) studied the effect of corporal punishment on the development of cognitive ability within a cohort of 2 to 4 year olds, and another cohort of 5 to 9 year olds over a four-year period. Results showed that the use of corporal punishment was associated with slower development of cognitive ability. Specifically, their study found a negative and statistically significant correlation between corporal punishment and cognitive ability for children ages 2 to 4 years at time 1 ($r = -.10, p < .01$) and four years later at time 2 ($r = -.12, p < .01$), as measured by the Body Parts Recognition, Memory for Locations, and Motor and Social Development tests, or the Peabody Individual Achievement Tests for Math and Reading Recognition as appropriate for the child's age. For children ages 5 to 9 years old, results also showed a negative and statistically significant negative correlation between corporal punishment

and cognitive ability at time 1 ($r = -.16, p < .01$) and at time 2 ($r = -.21, p < .01$), as measured by the same tests. An earlier study (Smith and Brooks-Gunn, 1997) found similar results. Mothers' use of harsh discipline among girls resulted in IQ scores that were on average 12 points lower than the control group. Therefore, it is logical to assume that if the child discipline practices of Jamaican immigrant parents are characterized by use of corporal punishment, it may be beneficial for school counselors to provide information to those parents on the effects of corporal punishment and teach them positive parenting skills. This would be especially useful at the earlier grades when corporal punishment is more likely to be used.

Beyond its potential effects on academic achievement, corporal punishment may also have an impact on the educational experience of Jamaican immigrant students in terms of child abuse reporting and socialization within the school. Fontes (2002) noted that norms concerning acceptable parenting and discipline differ by culture. Jamaican immigrant parents may be unaware as to what constitutes abuse in U.S. culture, unknowingly subjecting themselves to protective services investigations or even removal of a child from the home. Several authors have documented the confusion, frustration, and intimidation immigrant parents face when confronted with the laws of the new culture and the policies of social institutions regarding child discipline (e.g., Baptiste, 2005; Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 1997). Moreover, when child abuse reports are made and determined to be unfounded, parents often feel alienated or fearful of school officials (Waters, 1999; Glick, Hanish, Yabiku, & Bradley, 2012). Jamaican immigrant parents value education (Yearwood, 2001), however, charges of child abuse

may be viewed as signs of disrespect and decrease the amount of family involvement and socialization within the school among these parents (Bradley, 1998; Earner, 2007).

Method

Procedure

Data for this study were collected through both paper and pencil and online administrations of a survey packet, which consisted of: (1) the survey questionnaire, (2) an informed consent letter informing participants about the voluntary nature of the study, risks, benefits, and their right to not participate, and (3) a self-addressed stamped envelope. To protect their anonymity, participants were asked to not include any identifying information on the questionnaire. Participation was solicited from the members of five churches that served majority Jamaican immigrants (three churches in the Bronx, one in Brooklyn, and one suburban church situated in Westchester, a county adjacent to the Bronx), and from a predominantly Jamaican private school (Nursery to 6th grade) in the Bronx and a national Union of Jamaican alumni association with members who are located in the five boroughs of NYC, comprised of participants who attended high schools in Jamaica. Participants from the church setting were offered the paper and pencil administration of the survey. Those who opted to complete the surveys at church filled out the questionnaire during or after regularly scheduled services in a private section of the church, and deposited the completed surveys in a sealed envelope to a box that was provided for that purpose. Those who opted not to complete the survey on the spot were given the option to take it home and return it via postal mail in a pre-stamped envelope. The two groups from the private school and the alumni association completed the survey online. The first author contacted the principal of the

school and the president of the alumni association and asked them to inform their members about the study. Upon their agreement, a link to the survey was sent for distribution to the members of the respective groups. The link included the identical survey materials that were provided to the church group.

Participants

Participants were 311 first generation Jamaican immigrants residing in New York City. This cross-sectional survey study utilized a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a technique that selects participants in a deliberate fashion in order to achieve research goals and to meet specific characteristics of the larger population. A purposive sampling technique was especially useful in this study, because it was difficult to find enough participants in one location. An a priori power analysis indicated that a sample size of 100 would be required to determine a medium effect size with an alpha of .05. Mothers represented 236 of the sample; 70 were fathers. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 76 years ($M = 46.6$ years) and resided in the metropolitan New York City area. The majority of participants ($n = 293$, 94.2%) self-identified as Black Jamaicans; the rest self-identified as other, ($n = 6$, 1.9%), East Indian Jamaican ($n = 5$, 1.6%), Chinese Jamaican ($n = 3$, 1.0%), White Jamaican ($n = 1$, 0.3%), and three did not indicate their race, which accounted for 1.0%. Most participants ($n = 170$, 56.7%) resided in households with both parents living at home with their children, followed by mother alone with children ($n = 89$, 29.7%), other ($n = 34$, 10.9%), father ($n = 7$, 2.3%), and missing ($n = 11$, 3.5%). Mothers were, reportedly, the major disciplinarian, ($n = 159$, 51.1%), followed by mother and father sharing equally ($n = 118$, 37.9%), father as major disciplinarian ($n = 17$, 5.5%), other ($n = 6$, 1.6%), and missing (n

= 9, 2.9%). The overall response rate was 31.3% and the usable response rate was 28.8%.

Instrumentation

Data on child disciplinary practices were gleaned from an adapted version of the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC) (2004), a 54-item annual survey administered in Jamaica to help gauge the country's progress on a number of social issues. Data given in this report were obtained from the first section of the adapted version of JSLC, which contained demographic questions. Data were also obtained from the third section, which measured how often parents used the following 10 disciplinary techniques: (a) *None*; (b) *Ignoring*; (c) *Reasoning/discussion/counsel with the child*; (d) *Timeout (put in a corner/send to room/isolate)*; (e) *Denying food*; (f) *Removing privileges*; (g) *Quarreling/shouting*; (h) *Beating with an implement*; (i) *Slapping/hitting with hands*; and (j) *Other* with younger children (5-11 years) and older children (12-18 years). Response choices ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very often*). The first author's decision to develop a survey and use of quantitative measure was decided after reviewing numerous studies on parenting styles and discipline practices, an appropriate questionnaire that specifically addressed the concerns from the literature, or responded to the research questions of this study was unavailable. Further, many of the earlier studies of Jamaican childrearing and discipline practices utilized inherently biased questionnaires that reflected European/western norms (e.g., Landman, Grantham-McGregor, & Desai, 1983; Morrison, Ispa, & Milner., 1998), or qualitative approaches, such as unstructured interviews with observational techniques (e.g., Clarke, 1957, 1966; Kerr, 1957; Smith, 1970), both of which were unsuitable for

this study. The literature on Jamaican parenting and child disciplinary practices (e.g., Clarke, 1957; Kerr, 1957; Morrison, Ispa, & Milner, 1998; Payne, 1989; Ricketts & Anderson, 2008), guided the choice of items and questions used in this survey, thereby enhancing the content and face validities of the survey.

Data Analysis

This study used non-parametric procedures because the frequency of use of disciplinary techniques was measured on an ordinal scale (from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very often*) (i.e., the data were categorical, represented by discrete numbers). In regard to Research Question 1 (What are the types of disciplinary techniques used by Jamaican immigrant parents in the United States, and how frequently are those techniques used?), descriptive statistics (i.e., percentages, means, and standard deviation) were used to determine the child disciplinary practices used and the frequency with which each practice was used.

For Research Question 2 (Do the frequency and types of disciplinary technique parents used vary as a function of child's age group?), we performed both a Chi-square and Fisher's Exact tests to compare the two age groups for each discipline technique. These tests were selected to determine if there was an association between age group membership (i.e., 5-11 years, 12-18 years) and disciplinary technique used. More specifically, these tests were selected to determine if there was a statistically significant deviation from the expected outcome should these two groups be independent (as assumed under the null hypothesis) or, put simply, to ascertain whether two independent groups differed from each other in the proportion of participants who fell into each group (Pett, 1997). Both of the tests are used when the independent and

dependent variables are nominal or categorical. We recognize that Chi Square and the Fisher Tests are similar and essentially check for the same things; however, as a means of quality assurance, both tests were utilized to parallel and to confirm each other.

In regard to Research Question 3 (Do the frequency and types of disciplinary techniques used vary as a function of parental status (mother/father)?) Fisher Exact tests were conducted to examine whether differences were evident. The Fisher Exact test is the non-parametric version of the correlation coefficient. Although the authors considered performing a Wilcoxon-Mann U test, we did not do so due to the unequal sample sizes of mothers versus fathers; the mother group was significantly larger than the father group and thus the sum of the ratings used in the Wilcoxon-Mann U test would lose their meaning. Instead, we ran Fisher's Exact test to compare the groups since this test uses proportions in its calculations. We used this test to see whether the proportions of one variable were different depending on the value of the other variable.

Results

Types of Disciplinary Techniques

An examination of the disciplinary techniques most commonly used by Jamaican immigrant parents in the United States and how frequently those techniques were used, indicated that the disciplinary practices used most frequently with both groups of children (5-11 years; 12-18 years) were *Reasoning* ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.22$; $M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.25$) and *Removal of Privileges* ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.30$; $M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.37$). The second most frequent choices for the younger group were *Slapping/hitting with hands* ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.40$) and *Timeout* ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.39$). However, for the older group,

the second most frequent choices were *Quarrelling/shouting* ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.54$) and *Slapping/hitting with hands* ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.37$). The least frequently used discipline practice for both age groups were *Beating with an implement* ($M = 2.11$, $SD = 1.34$; $M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.37$); *Ignoring* ($M = 1.69$, $SD = 1.05$; $M = 1.86$, $SD = 1.26$) and *Denying food* ($M = 1.22$, $SD = .80$; $M = 1.26$, $SD = .08$).

Frequency of Disciplinary Techniques

Tables 1 and 2 present the descriptive statistics for the frequencies of disciplinary techniques used by Jamaican immigrant parents in the United States for age groups 5-11 years and 12-18 years. For younger children, starting with the most used, *Reasoning* was selected by 48.6% of the respondents, *Removal of privileges* by 44.1%, *Slapping/hitting* by 14.6%, *Timeout* by 14.6%, *Quarreling/shouting* by 10%, *Beating with an implement* by 9%, *Ignoring* by 3.3% and *Denying food* by 2.9%. For older children, the order of frequency was *Reasoning* (55.6%), *Removal of privileges* (53.1%), *Quarrelling/shouting* (21.2%), *Slapping/hitting* (11.2%), *Timeout* (11.2%), *Beating with an implement* (9.4%), and *Denying food* (1.6%).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Discipline Techniques Used During Ages 5 to 11 Years
($N = 311$)

Technique	Very Often		Fairly Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Not at All	
	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>F</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)
Reasoning	133	(46.8)	67	(26.6)	48	(16.9)	16	(5.6)	19	(6.7)
Removing privileges	126	(44.1)	62	21.7	53	(18.5)	19	(6.6)	26	(9.1)
Slapping/hitting with hands	42	(14.6)	42	(14.9)	54	(19.2)	69	(24.4)	75	(26.7)
Timeout	41	(14.6)	42	(14.9)	54	(19.2)	69	(24.4)	75	(26.7)
Quarreling/shouting	28	(10.0)	26	(9.3)	57	(20.4)	71	(25.4)	98	(35.0)

Technique	Very Often		Fairly Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Not at All	
	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>F</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)
Beating with implement	25	(9.0)	23	(8.2)	48	(7.2)	44	(15.8)	139	(49.8)
Ignoring	9	(3.3)	11	(4.0)	34	(12.4)	51	(18.6)	169	(61.7)
Denying food	8	(2.9)	4	(1.4)	4	(1.4)	9	(3.2)	254	(91.0)

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of Discipline Techniques Used During Ages 12 to 18 Years (N = 311)

Technique	Very Often		Fairly Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Not at All	
	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)
Reasoning	148	(55.6)	55	(20.7)	27	(10.2)	16	(6.0)	20	(7.5)
Removing privileges	139	(53.1)	45	(17.2)	33	(12.6)	18	(6.9)	27	(10.3)
Quarreling/shouting	55	(21.2)	40	(15.4)	38	(14.7)	48	(18.5)	78	(30.1)
Slapping/hitting with hands	29	(11.2)	26	(10.0)	53	(20.5)	51	(19.7)	100	(38.6)
Timeout	29	(11.2)	16	(6.1)	37	(14.2)	45	(17.2)	134	(51.3)
Beating with implement	24	(9.4)	22	(8.7)	40	(15.7)	33	(13.0)	135	(53.1)
Ignoring	18	(7.1)	17	(6.7)	28	(11.0)	40	(15.7)	152	(59.6)
Denying food	4	(1.6)	5	(2.0)	12	(4.7)	11	(4.3)	222	(87.4)

Frequency of Disciplinary Techniques Used as a Function of Child's Age Group

In examining whether the frequency of disciplinary technique parents used varied as a function of child's age group, the two age groups (5-11 years; 12-18 years) were compared to see if age was a determining factor. The results of Fischer's Exact test indicated that age was a factor with respect to the use of *Timeout*, *Quarreling/shouting*, and *Slapping/hitting* with hands. For *Timeout*, this punishment was more frequently used with children in the 5-11 age group and less frequently used in the 12-18 age

group ($\chi^2 (4, N = 311) = 37.90, p = 0.00$; two-tailed Fisher Exact test, $p = 0.00$). For *Quarreling/shouting*, this punishment was more frequently used on children in the 12-18 age group and less frequently used on children in the 5-11 age group ($\chi^2 (4, N = 311) = 21.49, p = 0.00$; two-tailed Fisher's Exact test, $p = 0.00$). For *Slapping/hitting with hands*, this punishment was more frequently used on children in the 5-11 age group and less often used on the children in the 12-18 age group ($\chi^2 (4, N = 311) = 9.02, p = 0.06$; two-tailed Fisher's Exact test, $p = .06$, alpha level = .10). The other techniques were nonsignificant at the $p < .05$ levels (see Table 3).

Table 3

Chi Square Test of Differences in Use of Discipline Techniques by Age of Child

Discipline	Chi-Square	DF	p-value
Ignoring	6.42	4	0.17
Reasoning	7.37	4	0.12
Time Out	37.91	4	0.00***
Deny Food	6.64	4	0.16
Remove Privileges	7.00	4	0.14
Quarrel/Shout	21.49	4	0.00***
Beat with an implement	1.23	4	0.87
Slap/hit	9.02	4	0.06*

Note. *** = $p < .001$, * $p < .10$

Frequency of Disciplinary Techniques Used as a Function of Parental Status

In examining whether the frequency of disciplinary techniques used varied as a function of parental status (mother/father), we combined the two age groups for discipline techniques of *Ignoring*, *Reasoning*, *Removal of privileges*, *Beating with an implement*, and *Denying food*, since we found in the previous research question that the results in regard to these techniques were not dependent on the age group of the child.

However, for the disciplinary techniques of *Timeout*, *Quarreling/shouting*, and *Slapping/hitting*, we kept the age groups separate since the results were found to be associated with the age group of the child.

We then compared the responses of the respondents who identified as mothers versus those who identified as fathers. The results indicated that parental status appeared to be a factor with respect to the use of beating with an implement. While Fisher's Exact test resulted in $p = 0.16$, indicating that there was no statistical difference between the two groups in regard to this discipline strategy, a quick look at the percentages of frequency revealed a distinctive difference (see Table 4). Fathers chose a rating of 5 (*very often*) for this technique (beating with an implement) approximately 23.5% of the time and a rating of 1 (*not at all*) approximately 32.4% of the time, while mothers selected a rating of 5 (*very often*) for this technique approximately 9.4% of the time and a rating of 1 (*not at all*) approximately 44.3% of the time. The differences for the lowest and highest ratings accounted for the p-value balancing out, but the difference was notable. All of the other techniques were not significant at the $p < .05$ level (see Table 5). This outcome was not surprising given that some researchers report that the Fisher's Exact test is conservative and is less likely to reject the null hypothesis (Pett, 1997).

Table 4

Percentages of Mothers and Fathers' Use of Beating with an Implement

Beating With an Implement	Not at All/ Least (1)	Less (2)	Fair (3)	More (4)	Very Often/ Most (5)
Mother	44.3%	11.3%	11.95%	7.2%	9.4%
Father	32.4%	8.8%	14.7%	5.9%	23.5%

Table 5*Fisher's Exact Test of Difference in Use of Discipline Techniques by Parent Gender*

Discipline	p-value
Ignoring (Age groups collapsed)	0.21
Reasoning (Age groups collapsed)	0.82
Time Out (Aged 5-11)	0.85
Time Out (Aged 12-18)	0.83
Deny Food (Age groups collapsed)	0.12
Remove Privileges (Age groups collapsed)	0.56
Quarrel/Shout (Aged 5-11)	0.57
Quarrel/Shout (Aged 12-18)	0.62
Beat with an implement (Age groups collapsed)	0.16
Slap/hit (Aged 5-11)	0.44
Slap/hit (Aged 12-18)	0.87

*** = $p < .001$, * $p < .10$

Discussion

This study was driven by the need to overcome the paucity of research on the child discipline techniques of Jamaican immigrant in the United States. The study addressed many of the limitations of past studies (e.g., the exclusion of fathers, a sole focus on physical punishment) in an attempt to clarify the ambiguity about the parenting practices of that population. For the most part, the results of this study challenge prevailing assumptions about the almost universal use of corporal punishment among Jamaican parents. Prior studies indicated that physical discipline was the preferred method of discipline among Jamaican parents and primary caregivers (e.g., Lansford & Deater-Deckard, 2012; Ricketts & Anderson, 2008; Smith & Moore, 2013). However, in contrast, our data suggest that Jamaican immigrant parents in the United States use a variety of disciplinary techniques, and that the discipline techniques used most frequently with children regardless of the child's age are nonphysical. If and when

physical discipline is administered, it is used more so with younger (5 to 11 years) than older (12 to 18 years) children. Older children were more likely to be 'quarreled with or shouted at' than to receive physical discipline. This is consistent with at least one study (Ricketts & Anderson, 2008) that indicated that Jamaican parents tended to use more physical discipline with younger children. However, it is worth noting that in the Ricketts and Anderson (2008) study, the use of non-physical discipline interacted with the type and level of interaction between parent and child; higher levels of positive parent-child interaction predicted lower use of nonphysical punishment. Our data did not address parent-child interaction beyond that of discipline, but the general literature on the decreased use of physical punishment as children grew older has been well established (Lansford & Deater-Deckard, 2012).

The low frequency of beating with an implement and slapping/hitting found in this research must be considered within the context of our study's participants. The majority, 69 percent, of our sample indicated that they had a college education. A vibrant body of family literature has established a robust link between education level and corporal punishment (UNICEF, 2010). Across the globe, lower education has been found to be a risk factor for caregivers' administration of physical punishment to children (Lansford & Deater-Deckard, 2012) but past Jamaican studies (e.g., Landman, Grantham-McGregor, & Desai, 1983; Ricketts & Anderson, 2008; Smith, Springer & Barrett., 2011) have primarily used samples of low socioeconomic status and, by extension, low educational level. This may have contributed to findings of high rates of corporal punishment among Jamaican parents in previous studies, and low rates in the current study. Our findings are consistent with those of Bradley (1998a) and Adkison-Bradley,

Terpstra and Dormitorio (2014) regarding African American parenting practices. In the United States, the overwhelming majority of research has indicated that African American parents favor harsh and abusive discipline such as corporal punishment. However, Bradley (1998a) and Adkison-Bradley et al., (2014) reported that their sample of African Americans parents preferred to use nonphysical discipline. For example, “Discuss matter,” “give warning look,” “order child not to” and “withdraw privileges” were the most frequently used techniques. For preschooler and elementary aged children, parents used “discuss matter” most frequently and for adolescents, withdrawing privileges was preferred. Across all age groups, punitive discipline was used as a last resort. Bradley (1998a) argued that invariably when African American parents were included in research, low income mothers were most often selected “... and childrearing behaviors prevalent in low-income African American families were frequently generalized and accepted as descriptive of family life of all African American families” (p. 274).

Interestingly, a substantial proportion of participants (n = 118) indicated that the mother and father share equally disciplining their children. This is important for two reasons. First, this finding indicates that any interventions introduced to Jamaican immigrant parents should focus on mothers and fathers equally. Second, this finding further calls into question assumptions based on previous studies of Jamaican childrearing, which have primarily sampled mothers and neglected the role of fathers in the child discipline process. The current study points to a need for future research that is inclusive of a larger sample of Jamaican fathers.

Implications for School Counselors

As mentioned earlier, the *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* state that professional school counselors have an obligation to provide culturally competent counseling and school counseling program coordination (E.1.d). Culturally competent counselors avoid stereotyping, are knowledgeable about immigration issues, and are able to implement interventions across individual, family, and systemic levels (Arredondo et al., 1996). Therefore, school counselors should be careful to avoid assuming that corporal punishment is the discipline of choice among Jamaican immigrant parents. Instead, school counselors should exercise caution when discussing Jamaican immigrant parents' child discipline practices and avoid any judgmental dynamic that could lead to problematic relations between school personnel and parents. While school counselors are not required necessarily to embrace the child rearing protocols of culturally diverse clients, they are expected to be careful when they interpret behaviors and practices (Bradley, 1998b; Fontes, 2002). How counselors interpret immigrant parents' child discipline may either create or impede rapport with ethnically and culturally diverse families. Additionally, since Jamaican immigrant parents use a variety of child discipline practices, school counselors should inquire about the range of discipline techniques utilized within each Jamaican immigrant family. Engaging parents to determine their varied child discipline techniques/practices can provide specific information relevant to each family, and can be useful in implementing a culturally appropriate treatment plan. Interventions should include concrete training in the use of non-physical disciplinary practices.

Since the results of this study reveal that a small percentage of Jamaican immigrant parents use physical discipline, offering parenting workshops at the systemic level may be beneficial. When developing these parenting programs, school counselors should focus on providing parents with positive parenting strategies, and avoid working from a deficit perspective (Morrison, Steele, & Henry, 2015) and no group of parents should be singled out (Fontes, 2002); however, all Jamaican immigrant parents should be involved in training, as they are immersed in their own culture and know the strengths and challenges of their communities especially in relation to child discipline (Morrison, Steele & Henry, 2015). When developing parenting workshop it is important to consider that the disciplinary practices of Jamaican immigrant parents vary by child's age group and parental status/parent gender. School counselors are encouraged to educate parents, especially parents in elementary grades, about the laws surrounding physical discipline in their states. Parents need to know what is considered abusive and what is considered reasonable discipline.

Limitations

Despite the significance and value of this study, its limitations must be acknowledged. Data was obtained through self-report, which may have introduced non-response bias thus limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the sample was drawn primarily from religious and private educational organizations in New York City and participants were from a limited range of educational backgrounds, which further limits generalizability. Considering that physical discipline is a sensitive matter and potentially problematic in the United States, the issue of social desirability bias must also be considered here. Participants might have responded to the survey in a socially

acceptable manner, despite the promise of anonymity from the researchers. Social desirability, or the tendency for respondents to inaccurately report behaviors of a sensitive nature, is characteristic of self-reports (Brenner & DeLamater, 2014) and could be a contributor to the unexpected findings reported here. Another limitation is the study's low response rate of 31.3%, which, although considered typical in survey research, leads to the possibility of response bias. One cannot assume that participants who did not respond to the survey would have responded in the same way as those who responded. Therefore, non-response bias may limit the generalizability of the results. Further, the instrument used in this study is a newly developed one without prior information about reliability and validity. The findings from this study should therefore be interpreted with caution. Finally, because the study was cross-sectional, it does not indicate causality. Beyond these limitations, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of disciplinary practices among Jamaican immigrant families.

Recommendations for Future Research

Clearly, the limitations of this study pave the way for future research. For example, future research should extend replicate this study with Jamaican immigrants from other cities in the United States as well as explore the influence of various demographic characteristics including family structure, level of educational attainment, socioeconomic status, child's gender, and a larger group of males. Undoubtedly, disciplinary practices have been shown to vary as a function of various demographic variables. For example, the majority of participants were from a nuclear family type (i.e., mother and father living at home with children); therefore, we could not assess the relationship between family type and disciplinary techniques. Examining these

characteristics may give a broader picture of the child discipline techniques used by Jamaican immigrant parents. Future studies could also assess child discipline based on the length of time since parents immigrated to the United States and the stage of their acculturation process. It is prudent to theorize that new arrivals would exhibit more closely the characteristics of the culture from which they come than those of the host culture. Conversely, immigrants who are later in the acculturation process may have modified their child rearing strategies to conform to the prevailing practices of the host country. Another drawback centers on social desirability. A social desirability scale was not used in this study, therefore future studies might consider utilizing a social desirability feature to assess the degree to which participants might have responded to questions in a way that would be viewed favorably by others. Furthermore, a strong body of literature has shown that less affluent parents tend to employ more punitive disciplinary strategies (Smith & Mosby, 2003). Whether immigrant parents childrearing practices differ as a function of socioeconomic status need further study. Future studies should also include the children themselves to assess the level of agreement between parents and children. Our data utilized parents' self-reports of their disciplinary practice without independent validation, which might have introduced an element of reporter bias. Finally, we did not assess the differences in responses between respondents from the churches and those from secular groups (the private school and union of alumni association), future studies could assess for differences and or similarities based on secular and/or Christian beliefs.

Conclusion

School counselors must view each group or culture as unique as they work with immigrant families. They must seek to understand their values, particularly those related to the contentious issue of child discipline. Therefore, counselors are obliged to educate themselves on cultural nuances that might impede a cordial relationship between the home and school. One way would be for school counselors to help Jamaican immigrants understand the relevant laws relating to child rearing in the host culture. We believe school counselors must reach out to the Jamaican immigrant community to understand their values on child discipline. Parents need to feel that the school is working with them rather than against them as they seek to discipline their children within the context of the host culture. The following quote sums up the characteristics of Jamaican parents:

Jamaican parents are by nature very strict. From early childhood they urge their children to excel academically and athletically, they also encourage them to be discerning in regards to the company they keep. Although Jamaican parents are very stern, there is also another side to them. They are usually fun loving and very involved in all phases of their children's lives. They believe in rewarding their offspring for their accomplishments and endeavors. Unlike some cultures where parents tend to sever the connection with their children, once they have acquired their legal age, Jamaican families remain a constant guiding force in their children's lives well beyond adulthood. You are never too old to be scolded or be given

advice. As far as they are concerned you are always their child and they take that responsibility seriously (Bailey, 2002, para.2).

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