

## **The Development of Young Children in Immigrant Families: Contextual and Intervention Effects**

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- **Transnational Babies: Patterns and Predictors of Early Childhood Travel to Immigrant Mothers' Native Countries**

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Recent studies suggest that immigrant families and children are living their lives across national boundaries (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001). Research has noted that immigrant children are involved in transnational activities including separations from family members where a family member remains in the home country while other members immigrate (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002) and travel by children either with family or alone to the native country to live or visit for extended periods of time (Menjivar, 2002). The present study fills a gap in the immigration literature by examining patterns and predictors of transnational travel by infants from immigrant families. Participants were 240 low-income first-generation Dominican, Mexican, and Chinese mothers of newborn infants recruited from hospitals in a large Northeastern city. A survey at child's birth captured family characteristics, mother's travel plans for the child, the timeframe for the planned travel, and the reasons for child travel to her native country. Findings indicate that at child's birth 82% immigrant mothers had plans for their children's travel to her native country. There was no difference between Mexican and Dominican mothers. The combined Latino group was significantly more likely to plan child travel than the Chinese group,  $p = .016$ . The average age for expected child travel varied significantly by ethnic group,  $F(2, 236) = 44.72, p < .001$ , and was 7 months old for Chinese, 12 months old for Dominicans, and 55 months old for Mexican children. The travel reasons also varied by ethnic group. A high percentage of Chinese mothers mentioned financial constraints and childcare as reasons for their children's travel, compared to almost none of the Latina mothers. More Latina mothers than Chinese mothers planned their children's travel in order to meet family members. Similar and high percentages of mothers across groups considered grandparents as reason for their children's trips. Only Latina mothers reported the travel plans with intentions of letting them know the culture and countries. A series of regressions found younger Chinese mothers ( $B = -.34, Wald = 5.24, odds ratio = .71, p < .05$ ) or Chinese mothers with more social support in the U.S. ( $B = 2.14, Wald = 5.94, odds ratio = 8.53, p < .05$ ) were more likely to give "to see grandparents" as a reason for child travel. Latina mothers who reported more social support in the U.S. ( $B = 2.68, Wald = 5.99, odds ratio = 13.81, p < .05$ ), or who cohabitated with child's father ( $B = 1.52, Wald = 3.99, odds ratio = 4.55, p < .05$ ), or whose child's father had more schooling ( $B = .28, Wald = 5.41, odds ratio = 1.33, p < .05$ ) were more likely to mention "to see family" as a reason. During the first 6 months of child life, 72% of the Chinese mothers who could be contacted did send their babies back to visit or live in China. No Latina

children traveled to mothers' home countries in first year. Implications for such transnational travel on development are discussed.

### **References**

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- **Preparing the Way: Early Head Start and the Socioemotional Health of Latino Infants and Toddlers**

Krista M. Perreira, Linda S. Beeber, Todd Schwartz, Diane Holditch-Davis

*(Summary not Available)*

- **Shared Narratives: A Promising Approach for Supporting Language and Literacy Skills With Migrant Families**

Lisa K. Boyce, Lori A. Roggman, Mark S. Innocenti, Voda Jump, Lara Linares

Simple shared narratives, in which parents and children tell their stories, offer a promising way to engage parents and children in culturally relevant literacy activities that encourage emergent literacy and language development. Many migrant-worker and English Language Learner (ELL) families may be particularly interested in activities that not only promote their children's school readiness by enriching their language and literacy experiences but also promote family values. A family-made book is particularly relevant, engaging, and understandable not only for the children but for their parents with limited literacy skills and experiences.

For the current study we conducted a brief home visiting intervention with 18 Migrant and Seasonal Head Start families with 3- and 4-year-old children. Two home visits were conducted by a Spanish-speaking home visitor with the goal to promote families' language and literacy interactions. Parents were encouraged to tell their own stories, prompted to elicit their children's stories, and assisted in recording these stories in personalized story books for their children.

Because parents' literacy skills varied with some having very limited skills (50% had less than six years of education), an interactive activity focused on making a book of "favorite

things” was selected to facilitate parent-child conversation, build on common cultural practices, and encourage meaningful literacy interactions. During the first home visit, parents and children talked about their “favorite things” with the goal to develop a book, complete with photos of the children and parents with some of those favorite things. One hour was planned for the home visits, but these visits often took 1.5 hours because parents and children were so involved. After the home visit, the home visitor took the book, printed the digital photos on their respective pages, laminated the pages, and bound the book. She gave the book to the family at the second home visit, and the parent and child had the opportunity to read the book together.

To get feedback for our study, the home visitor asked parents a series of questions about the home visits and book making process. Parents wanted more home visits and said the home visits helped them learn more about their children. They also said it was good for their kids and that activities like this could help prepare the children for school. One mother said [comments translated from Spanish as needed], “It is important to have activities like this one for Latino families so they could improve their level of readiness when children start school.” Several parents noted how much their children enjoyed the activity. “I like that he has his own book and he knows his history, he told his dad what he was doing in the book.”

The results from this small study are promising, suggesting that when parents and children are engaged together in producing a book, the result is also a powerful resource for parent-child conversation and shared literacy experiences, even when parents cannot read and there are few literacy materials in the home.