



## Variation in early cognitive development by maternal immigrant documentation status



Yoonsook Ha<sup>a,\*</sup>, Marci Ybarra<sup>b</sup>, Anna D. Johnson<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Boston University, School of Social Work, 264 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215, United States

<sup>b</sup> The University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration, 969 E. 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, United States

<sup>c</sup> Georgetown University, Department of Psychology, 3700 O Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20057, United States

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Immigrants  
Undocumented  
Child care  
Cognitive development  
Latino children

### ABSTRACT

Children of Latino immigrants – including children of undocumented Latino immigrants – are among the fastest-growing demographic subgroups in the U.S. Although they possess great strengths and diversity, studies have identified gaps in early reading and math scores between preschool-age children of Latino immigrants and their peers. Little is known about how these early cognitive gaps and suspected predictors vary by maternal immigrant documentation status. The current study explores these unanswered questions using 2001 survey data from the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhoods Study. We test for differences in 3–5 year old children's reading and math scores according to maternal immigrant documentation status (undocumented Latina; documented Latina; citizen Latina; non-Latina citizen White). We also examine whether associations between an extensive set of family, child, and neighborhood covariates and the reading and math scores of these children vary by maternal immigrant documentation status. Consistent with prior research, findings show a gap in reading and math scores between Latino children regardless of documentation status, and the children of non-Latina White mothers. Yet our findings reveal nuance not detected in prior studies. Specifically, children of undocumented Latina mothers face greater socioeconomic hardships and have the lowest cognitive scores. Results suggest increasing cognitive stimulation in the home and participation in formal non-parental care may help close early learning gaps between Latino children with different documentation statuses and their peers with non-Latino citizen parents.

Children of immigrants – defined as those who are either native- or foreign-born with at least one foreign-born parent – represent one of the fastest-growing demographic subgroups in the United States (Haskins & Tienda, 2011), making up approximately 25% of all U.S. children (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Latino immigrants represent the largest proportion of immigrants in the U.S., accounting for over 60% of all immigrants in the U.S. (Jiang, Ekono, & Skinner, 2015). Additionally, nearly one-third of all children of immigrants have at least one parent that is undocumented (without a valid visa to reside in the U.S.) (Passel & Cohn, 2011), which equates to about 8% of all children in the U.S.

Research on children of immigrants points to comparative advantages and disadvantages that might influence cognitive development. Bilingual children – the majority of whom are children of immigrants – have been found to perform better on tasks measuring attentional focus (Carlson & Meltzoff, 2008), theory of mind (Bialystok, 2009; Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008), and spatial reasoning (Greenberg, Bellana, & Bialystok, 2013). Bilingual children also

demonstrate reduced internalizing and externalizing behavior problems compared to their monolingual peers (Espinosa, 2006, 2008). Yet, children of immigrants are also more likely to experience greater socioeconomic hardships than the children of native-born parents. More than half of children from all immigrant families live in low-income homes (Jiang et al., 2015), with slightly higher rates for Latino children.

Latino children of immigrants have also been found to experience a mix of supports and obstacles that might enhance or detract from early wellbeing. For example, they are more likely to live with two parents than to live with a single mother (Landale, Thomas, & Van Hook, 2011). Latino parents, and Mexican origin mothers in particular, have been found to emphasize the cultural value of 'educación' which refers to the encouragement of not only academic success but also respectable manners and moral behaviors among children (Bridges et al., 2012; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006; Valdés, 1996). This may explain why children of Latino immigrants demonstrate equal, if not better, social-emotional skills (e.g., enhanced self-regulation; reduced behavior

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [yha@bu.edu](mailto:yha@bu.edu) (Y. Ha), [mybarra@uchicago.edu](mailto:mybarra@uchicago.edu) (M. Ybarra), [Anna.Johnson@georgetown.edu](mailto:Anna.Johnson@georgetown.edu) (A.D. Johnson).

problems) at kindergarten entry, relative to their non-Latino white peers (Crosnoe, 2007; De Feyter & Winsler, 2009; Guerrero et al., 2013; Han, Lee, & Waldfogel, 2012). At the same time, Latina immigrants mothers tend to have lower levels of education and English fluency (Haskins & Tienda, 2011), which help explain why Latino children of immigrants often enter school with lower cognitive scores compared to their peers (Crosnoe, 2007; De Feyter & Winsler, 2009; Han, 2012; Magnuson, Lahaie, & Waldfogel, 2006) – a phenomenon largely explained by gaps in socioeconomic resources (Castro, 2014; Halle et al., 2014). Despite their strengths these early disparities may nonetheless place Latino children of immigrants at increased risk for low achievement, especially in critical language and literacy domains that are key for school success (Espinosa, 2013; Hoff, 2013; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). This is especially true for children of Mexican immigrant origin, whose families have among the lowest incomes and education levels (Brick, Challinor, & Rosenblum, 2011), and who may thus experience a more fragile foundation for early learning (Crosnoe, 2007; Fuller et al., 2009; Ortega et al., 2009; Yoshikawa, Godfrey, & Rivera, 2008).

To date, there remain a number of unanswered questions around how factors found to predict early cognitive skills and the early cognitive skills themselves vary by parental immigrant documentation status. Latino immigrant parents with different documentation statuses – native-born or naturalized citizen, documented, and undocumented – likely experience different levels of financial stress, workplace discrimination, access to resources available in public programs or in their neighborhood (e.g., publicly funded child care), and other challenges that may in turn influence socioeconomic wellbeing, mental health, and family life more generally (Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, & Lalonde, 2007; Yoshikawa & Kholoptseva, 2013). These factors have well-recognized effects on child cognitive development (e.g., Dawson et al., 2003; Evans et al., 2012; Kiernan & Huerta, 2008).

The current study aims to address these unanswered questions with data from the Los Angeles Families and Neighborhood Survey (L.A. FANS). The L.A. FANS is an ideal dataset for this inquiry because it includes a sizeable subsample of Latino immigrant families, is the only survey we know of that asks about maternal immigrant documentation status, and includes information on child cognitive assessments, family, child care, and neighborhood characteristics. This study focuses on preschool-age (3–5 years old) children's cognitive abilities (reading and math scores). Distinguishing differences in cognitive scores among Latino children by maternal immigration documentation status can inform efforts to target policy supports to the families who could benefit the most. Further, understanding whether associations between family, child, and neighborhood factors and early cognitive development vary by maternal immigrant documentation status will illuminate specific areas in which these families might benefit from additional support.

## 1. Conceptual framework

Two conceptual frameworks help guide our study: the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) and Yoshikawa and Kalil (2011)'s conceptual model that links the parental immigration status to children's developmental contexts. The ecological systems theory has long been used to explain a range of factors at multiple levels of a child's proximal environments that predict variation in children's early cognitive outcomes. This theory suggests that the proximal exchanges between children and their caregivers at the innermost layer of a child's bioecological web – the microsystem – impact children's development. Family background, parenting characteristics, and child care are considered proximal contexts in which early development occurs.

Yoshikawa and Kalil (2011)'s conceptual model adds to the ecological systems theory by explaining three key developmental contexts in which parental immigration documentation status can play a unique role: (1) immediate postmigration contexts; (2) experiences of proximal

social settings; and (3) family processes. Immediate postmigration contexts refer to political, legal or neighborhood contexts that families face immediately following the transition to undocumented status. Parents' fears of deportation, economic hardships, and the characteristics of the neighborhoods they are settled in (e.g., a high concentration of coethnics; economically depressed areas) could affect children's development. Secondly, parents with precarious immigration statuses may have different experiences interacting with their proximal social settings (e.g., public policy, early childhood education, housing, work conditions). Undocumented parents may be particularly reluctant to use public programs and services, even if their children are eligible, due to the risks of detection and deportation, and confusion or lack of information regarding their children's program eligibility. Finally, family process refers to mediating mechanisms that other contextual factors (e.g., economic hardship, neighborhoods) have on child development. For instance, increased psychological, financial, and parenting stress can have negative effects on parenting practices and economic investments in children. This conceptual model suggests that parents with different immigration statuses may have different resources to draw from to support their children's cognitive growth for a host of reasons. In particular, the model suggests that undocumented parents face comparably higher levels of fears of deportation, economic hardship, and lack of access to publicly available resources which can negatively affect family processes and thus child cognitive outcomes.

Guided by these two theoretical frameworks, we focus on three sets of predictors: (1) family-level factors, including family structure, parental education and work status, and family process; (2) child-level factors, including child demographic characteristics and child care arrangements; and (3) neighborhood-level factors, including the concentration of immigrants, neighborhood disadvantage, and social cohesion. We first examine the link between parental immigrant documentation status and child cognitive outcomes (reading and math scores), while holding this diverse set of predictors constant. Then, drawing on our comprehensive set of covariates, we predict cognitive scores from the comprehensive set of family, child, and neighborhood variables according to parental immigrant documentation status.

### 1.1. Literature on factors related to early cognitive outcomes: general population

A number of studies have established that family characteristics influence children's developmental outcomes. Children from families with greater economic resources (Yeung, Linver, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002), two parents in the home (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001), resource-rich home environments and high levels of maternal supportiveness (Downer & Pianta, 2006; Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, 2006; Tomopoulos et al., 2006) have enhanced cognitive outcomes relative to children raised in homes with fewer of these supports. Whereas positive parenting practices, such as maternal attitudes toward child rearing and nurturance, have been found to be significantly related to higher cognitive outcomes among children (Lahaie, 2008; Tomopoulos et al., 2006), maternal depression has been significantly and negatively related to preschool children's cognitive development (Brennan et al., 2000; Dawson et al., 2003; Evans et al., 2012; Farver et al., 2006).

Within the family, the type of non-parental child care that children experience has emerged as an important child-level predictor of children's early cognitive development. Types of non-parental care are typically categorized by regulation status (regulated vs. unregulated or formal vs. informal) and/or by setting (center- vs. home-based). Center-based settings are regulated or formal, meaning that they are most likely to be licensed and thus required to meet certain regulatory standards. Formal home-based care, often referred to as family child care, is also often regulated whereas informal home-based care is typically unregulated and provided by a relative, neighbor, or friend. In general, the developmental quality of formal, regulated settings tends to be higher than those of unregulated settings, with center-based

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات