

## Promoting Immigrant Parents' Engagement in Early Intervention Through Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Service Delivery

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### Abstract

This article focuses on the use of culture-based play, songs, and games in the early education of newcomers to the United States. Current studies examine culturally inclusive practices in PreK-12 schools in America, Canada, and Australia and suggest that parents participate more enthusiastically when their cultural orientation is honored. Although there is scant research regarding in-home early intervention for infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing for recent immigrants to the United States, the same principle may hold true for this group of immigrants. The type of parent involvement that an early interventionist in the U.S. hopes to elicit in new immigrant families thoughtfully builds on a family's own knowledge—engaging them in activities that promote child development, language, and literacy using cultural and linguistic practices that respect and support them. The article concludes with one deaf educator's account of using informal cultural assessment with newcomer families that leads to strategies to engage them in early intervention activities with their infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing (Appendix A). We include an appendix of songs, nursery rhymes, and games for infants and toddlers in Spanish and English (Appendix B).

*Many of you have immigrated to this country at great personal cost, but in the hope of building a new life. Do not be discouraged by whatever challenges and hardships you face....Please do not be ashamed of your traditions...Do not forget the lessons you learned from your elders, which are something you can bring to enrich the life of this American land. (Pope Francis, 2015)*

### Introduction

The United States of America is home to the largest number of international migrants in the world. Approximately 53% of the foreign-born in the United States hail from Latin America, 25% from Asia, 14% from Europe and 8% from other regions of the world (International Organization for Migration, n.d.). A family's culture and the way they play with their children intersects with child development in early intervention services to these families who are newcomers to the United States and who have very young children with special needs. Parental engagement is reciprocal, based on relationships, and is culturally and linguistically responsive (Amorsen, 2015; Georgis, Gokiart, Ford, & Ali, 2014). Although most current research focuses on the effect of cultural and linguistic responsiveness on school age students and their families, this article focuses on ways to more effectively engage families who speak Spanish in early intervention for their infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing. After looking at background research into broad concepts of culture and play, this article shares observations of common barriers that interventionists experience when working with immigrant families and discusses strategies that work best to engage parents in early intervention activities to benefit their children (see Appendix A). The use of culturally appropriate games, songs, and rhymes as well as an understanding of and respect for a family's cultural traditions, beliefs, and values gives parents a better understanding of how to promote child development through family-led routines.

### Changing Populations

"America is a nation of immigrants. That diversity is the backbone of our arts, industry, and culture" (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2015, overview para 1). According to the Department of Homeland Security, the United States welcomes an average of 3000 new citizens daily and grants residency to an additional 3400 people. In recent decades, the United States has seen large-scale immigration, particularly among Hispanic peoples. Nearly 25% of children under the age of 18 in the U.S. are either immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants (Hernandez, Denton, & Maccartney, 2008).

### The Youngest Immigrants

Although public schools are often the first interactive point for immigrant families who have school-aged children, early intervention for children who are at risk for or have special needs creates particularly delicate situations in which interventionists visit these infants and toddlers in the family home. Parent involvement in early intervention is especially necessary to promote rapid development of skills and language development during the first three years of life (DesJardin, 2006; Kuhl, 2010; Moeller, 2000; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2013). When a child is deaf or hard of hearing, early intervention services focus intensely on language access and development, most of which occurs within a family setting. When a family speaks a language other than English, parents' abilities to interact with the interventionist may be noticeably limited by language barriers as well as restricted in more obscure ways by cultural differences. Family interactions with their child may be misunderstood or undervalued by monolingual interventionists, or by those

professionals who are, most often unwittingly, tethered to a western cultural perspective. Opportunities for language learning through cultural resources may be overlooked. Parent-engagement and child development can be successfully primed when an educator is attuned to the desires and expectations of the family within the framework of their specific culture (Purcell-Gates, Lenters, McTavish, & Anderson, 2014).

### **Culture-What Is It And How Do We Talk About It?**

*Culture* is notoriously difficult to define. “Every culture is characterized, and distinguished from other cultures, by deeply rooted and widely acknowledged ideas about how one needs to feel, think, and act as a functioning member of the culture” (Bornstein, 2015). Children form their very earliest identities within their families and the culture their families embrace (Becker, 2014; Guo, 2015). Bronfenbrenner (1979) considered culture a macro-system. This over-arching system is the framework in which parenting beliefs and practices shape the development of children. The voices of parents become the internal voices of children as they grow, even as they adapt to a new country and learn a new language.

### **Educators as Cultural Workers**

Research that examines classrooms that promote multicultural activities and parental engagement look at best practice in supporting children and parents who are recent immigrants (Amorsen, 2015; Bentley, 2012; Friedrich, Anderson & Morrison, 2014; Georgis et al., 2014; Guo, 2015; Marschall, Shah, & Donato, 2012; Purcell-Gates et al., 2014). Public schools’ receptivity to immigrant parents has a positive effect on parent involvement. The involvement of parents of immigrant students must be supported by the use of cultural brokers, teacher training, and in-service professional development. Principals of color, particularly, take more active roles in addressing the needs of immigrant and minority parents (Marschall, Shah, & Donato, 2012). Although public schools are the “frontline of receiving immigrants to this country” (Marschall, Shah, & Donato, 2012, p. 130), early intervention for children who have disabilities, including children who are deaf or hard of hearing, actually interacts with families long before the children enroll in Preschool or K-12 public schools. There are few studies of immigrant parent involvement in Pre-K settings and in home-based early intervention.

Although parents and teachers form strong partnerships and families place high value on bilingualism, early interventionists regularly miss opportunities to identify family routines and areas of expertise and interest (Puig, 2012). Studies of preschool classrooms indicate that teachers are consciously able to create equitable and socially just learning environments, but often cannot let go of their own pedagogical foundations enough to fully understand what parents value. Guo (2015) studied how educators responded to the interests and needs of children

of minority cultures in a multicultural program in an early childhood setting. She found that although the teachers cared deeply about children and felt they were devoted to children’s interests and needs, parents were not completely satisfied with the program. Her study illustrated that these parents and teachers had different perceptions about their children’s needs and interests. Teachers were unable to put aside their own, culture-bound pedagogical foundations and responded to children within the constraints of that knowledge. Parents’ understanding of their children’s needs and their expectations about learning were quite different and based on their cultures. This gap between the teachers’ and the parents’ cultural understanding kept educators from building complete awareness of children’s learning needs. It was only through work with the parents that teachers were able to build knowledge about those students from minority cultural backgrounds (Guo, 2015).

Another study of a Canadian literacy program found a similar pattern of culture-blindness:

Time and again, our field notes indicated that “our” perspectives on the role of families and parents in the literacy development of their children were not the perspectives held by the families with whom we were working. Because we all considered ourselves good “cultural” researchers, we continued to focus on this uncomfortable fact and tried to understand it. (Purcell-Gates et al., 2014, p. 20)

As these teachers came to understand how to work toward their stated goal of preparing youngsters for Canadian kindergartens while also embracing the importance of the cultural frames of the families, they found that the parents became their teachers. They understood that culture is not simply something other people do, but that teachers, as “cultural workers” (Freire, 1970), value and learn about diverse cultures, while also critically acknowledging and examining their own. A social constructivist perspective suggests that teachers are catalysts for empowering children and families and for giving them voice (Freire, 1970).

### **Cultural Capital**

There is still a tendency among teachers to perceive parental involvement in relation to parents’ *cultural capital* (Georgis et al., 2014). Whereas middle-class parents from the dominant culture may be valued as participants in educational settings, those who are from a different culture and may “speak English as a second language... are portrayed as empty containers, which need to be filled before they can give anything of value to the schools or their own offspring” (Lightfoot, 2004, p. 93). Engagement with families from different cultures goes well beyond superficial cultural awareness activities typified by yearly teacher-training regarding race, culture, and equality or a printout synopsis of cultural differences and highlighting a few, token, stereotypical or geographically limited cultural practices as representative of a larger group of quite

diverse families (Bentley, 2012). The cursory nature of this type of training continues to reinforce the idea that groups other than White and English-speaking families are the exception and bring less capital to the relationship. The ability to recognize the value of other cultures may be limited by the saturation of the predominant culture's social bias.

### **Cultural Brokers**

Cultural brokers facilitate recognition of cultural value. Cultural brokering is defined as the act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change (Jezewski, 1990). A cultural broker acts as a go-between, one who advocates on behalf of another individual or group (Jezewski & Sotnik, 2001). Cultural brokers bring a deep understanding of a culture and the respect that comes with this awareness. The use of cultural brokers in school settings has succeeded in including parents who are newcomers in the school community. Marschall et al. (2012) looked at parent involvement in American schools and found that parent involvement may look different, but occurs with immigrant families if one has the vision to recognize it. Their findings indicate that cultural brokers, as defined by Jezewski and Sotnick (2001), successfully facilitate family engagement. However, "teachers who do not share linguistic or racial/ethnic background with their students can...function in ways similar to cultural brokers....as a result of enhanced education, training, and professional development focused on issues of culture, language and immigration" (Marschall et al., 2012, p. 147). Targeted training gives those who are not bilingual or bicultural tools with which to more successfully engage newcomer families.

### **Using Culturally Familiar Educational Content**

Parent engagement can be achieved by drawing from culturally familiar pedagogical practices using "culturally familiar and relevant content" in the first language of the community along with some English (Friedrich et al., 2014, p. 72). In this study, families of preschoolers generated songs and rhymes in their first language, sometimes followed by an English version, as many parents were in the process of learning English. Parents reported that they valued the opportunity to maintain their first language because they felt that if they did not, "kids will forget their own language, [and] the relationship between parents and children will be hard" (p. 76). The use of their own cherished songs and rhymes brought participants together in learning. Using song, rhyme, and daily language involvement when working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families is important to help the children develop listening and language skills. During these early years, a firm first language is an essential need for a child (Watkin et al., 2007). This language most likely is not English when parents are not fluent English-users. In fact, parents need to know how valuable their own language is to their child's optimum development.

### **What is Play?**

Play is central to children's development of mental functions during the preschool years (Vygotsky, 1978). Play occurs in a social context that is framed by cultural beliefs and parenting practices (Whiting, 1963). Academics have had a good deal of trouble defining play (Johnson, Christie, & Yawkey, 1999). When researchers examine play, they tend to characterize play and types of play according to their specific research focus, scholarly discipline, and ideology (Cheng & Johnson, 2010). Cultural orientation also influences the ways that play is observed and described. For the purposes of this article there is no single, clear definition that will cover all the different meanings given by parents, educators, researchers, and even children themselves. Although there is not one clear definition of what constitutes play, there is a good deal of research about the characteristics of play as well as the common themes in human play. Common themes in children's play according to Lindon (2001) are:

- Very young children display playful behavior when they explore sounds, engage in simple actions, experiment with objects of interest... and engage in simple give and take or copying games with their peers, older siblings, or adults.
- Children choose games or activities they enjoy.
- Children enjoy and learn from repetitive songs, rhymes, and games.
- Play activities are not essential to meet basic physical survival needs, but play does seem to support children's emotional well-being as well as a wide range of learning.

### **Culture Shapes Play**

In all societies, parents influence the way children play (Cote & Bornstein, 2009) and play is an activity through which cultural values are transmitted (Tamis-LeMonda, Katz, & Bornstein, 2002). Play within the framework of a child's culture promotes socialization, learning, bonding, self-identity, and the security of structure and routine that encourages youngsters to thrive. Families from different cultural backgrounds share commonalities and differences regarding child-rearing goals and views about children's play. Children are taught to play in ways valued by the culture in which their parents were raised. Immigrant families may be disconcerted by aspects of play in their culture of destination "and culture-specific aspects of play from the immigrants' culture of origin may be interpreted by clinicians, teachers, or others as problematic simply because they differ from those of the culture of destination" (Cote & Bornstein, 2009, p. 355).

### **Identity and Play**

Children create their identities very early on through their family and culture. Play is situated in culture both in the spontaneous ways that parents engage their children in play and through the formal games, songs, and play activities that are passed on from one generation to another as part of a "cultural template" (Zarnegar, 2015).

Recognizing the importance of the social and cultural spaces in which play occurs, researchers have recently intensified their focus on “examining the nature and quality of interactions during play as they relate to cultural socializations patterns” (Roopnarine & Davidson, 2015, p. 239). This involves valuing the family culture in its entirety. Play is one vehicle for cultural transmission. It is through play that children, parents, and extended family members enjoy each other while building and reinforcing self and family. The use of a family’s traditional play, songs, and stories not only brings teachers into equal relationship with parents; but also allows them to better perceive the children’s skills and developmental trajectories. Play is one part of a cultural template that guides parents in facilitating successful child development and allows teachers to recognize this important development. The use of play in early intervention can capitalize on family routines and values with a focus on family-identified vocabulary, social language, and the language of home routines.

### **Play Flows!**

When challenges are balanced by skills, attention is heightened and allows the person to enjoy the experience of being fully engaged in an activity (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2012). Like children engrossed in play, this attitude in adults is optimum for learning and creativity. It is similar to Vygotsky’s *zone of proximal development* where a child, at the peak of their developmental level, is intrinsically motivated yet challenged; the optimum state for learning (Vygotsky, 1978). When families play together the enjoyment enhances the child’s self-esteem and builds family relationships. When parents engage children in play, it is a special time (Lieberman, 1993). Barbara Rogoff (2003) documents the efficacy of *intent participation learning* in which children from an early age participate actively and imaginatively in culturally meaningful activities. Rituals that express parents’ enjoyment of play with the willing participation of infants create loving linguistic connections that draw on traditional songs and actions that are treasured (Trevarthen, 1999).

### **Traditional Cultural Games**

Every country has traditional games that have been part of their culture for generations. These games were a way to teach the skills needed to survive in that particular society as well as global developmental skills and were passed down from generation to generation. Unfortunately due to globalization, migration, the disintegration of the extended family, acculturation, and assimilation, many of these games are disappearing and with them wonderful opportunities for children to practice needed developmental skills as well as learn the families’ cherished cultural heritage.

Although the Latino/Hispanic ethnic groups share some common cultural values and beliefs, they are a diverse population that includes different races, mixed races, and different countries. Although some celebrations are

shared, there may be variations of celebrations and even different rituals in the many countries that are part of Hispano America. They also have different foods, music, and dances. When it comes to games, stories, and songs there may be different variations of the same themes (for example there are different variations of an infant game named *Acerrín Acerrán* (see Appendix B) or completely different games, such as *la Huerfanita* in Central America, and different nursery rhymes and songs, such as *pon pon tata* in Mexico.

### **Play in Society and Culture**

The study of play, as reviewed in educational and developmental journals, tends to focus on the context of play and play as related to intervention with children who have special needs (Cheng & Johnson, 2010). The role of play as a vehicle for cultural transmission and to assist in bridging language and cultural barriers between the dominant culture and newcomers to the United States has been given little attention. There are many ethnographic studies of cultural and traditional plays and songs in African, Chinese, Javanese, Lithuanian, and other cultures, but none have focused on how using traditional play can help build relationships, language, and other developmental skills within immigrant communities. Immigrant children often lose touch with their indigenous play as they acquire high tech toys, video games, computers, and other technological gadgets. In their rush to assimilate into the new culture they leave their birth-culture behind (Khasandi-Telewa, 2012).

### **Play and the Preservation of Cultural Heritage**

Traditional games are a way to teach the needed skills, values, and norms of a specific culture (Garoz & Linaza, 2008). Play, in addition to being important in child development, serves as an acculturative mechanism (Hyun, 1998). Teachers must strive to provide their students with an environment that is culturally inclusive and to remember that “traditional games are a precious intangible cultural heritage inseparable from community [and family] life.” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Bangkok, n.d). Traditional games share the characteristic of having been passed on through oral tradition from generation to generation. Children learn these games from their parents, grandparents, and the older children in their extended families as well as from teachers at school. In many Latin countries, traditional games are part of physical education classes. Cultural content is often embedded in the songs and chants, gestures and movements, roles assigned, and goals of the game (UNESCO, Bangkok, n.d.)

### **Children Who Are Deaf Or Hard Of Hearing**

Children who are deaf or hard of hearing may have language delays that put them at risk for developing positive social skills, self-esteem, and academic readiness. Early intervention for those children often has a primary

focus on potential language deficits due to inability to access language either auditorily or visually. These children may also exhibit different or limited play skills in comparison with same age peers who are typically developing (Sualy, Yount, Kelly-Vance, & Ryalls, 2011). When partnering with families who have different cultural expectations about play and whose traditions in play differ from those in the United States, understanding how and why a child plays as she or he does, as well as the language used in play, will help enhance a child's competencies.

### Helpful R's: Resources, Respect, and Responsiveness

There are many resources available on ways to play with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and developing listening and language skills, notably through cochlear implant company support websites:

- [www.advancedbionics.com](http://www.advancedbionics.com)
- [www.cochlearamericas.com](http://www.cochlearamericas.com)
- [www.medel.com](http://www.medel.com)

These include listening games, songs, books, and play materials, most with a focus on Western culture and English language. However, some resources include materials in other languages. Materials in *The Listening Room* at the Advanced Bionics site include vocabulary and songs in Spanish, English, and French. Resources for infants and toddlers who are learning visual language, from such organizations as the American Society for Deaf Children (<http://deafchildren.org/knowledge-center/parents-and-families/early-visual-language/>) provide excellent support, mostly in English and American Sign Language (ASL). Gallaudet University and the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center offer a variety of programs and services that meet the needs of deaf children, parents, and professionals ([www.gallaudet.edu](http://www.gallaudet.edu)). A good resource for cultural background can be found at [Pocketcultures.com](http://Pocketcultures.com) (Pocket Cultures, 2012).

Low-tech play materials are better than high-tech for encouraging cognitive development and creative play. Toys and objects that have meaning within the cultural community should be considered when working with families who may encourage play with toys and objects based on their culture of origin. The use of real objects or toys that look real can help children learn to problem-solve and participate in routines within the social and cultural context of their own families (Roopnarine & Davidson, 2015). Songs and games in the family language encourage important cross-generational play (Zero To Three, n.d.). Literacy activities can include books in the home language or stories from rich oral traditions. The best practice for professionals should involve research, receptivity, and outreach for families' unique cultural resources.

Although there is insufficient research on the efficacy of using traditional nursery rhymes, songs, poems, stories, and games while delivering services in early intervention, there is little dispute about the importance of delivering these services in the family's home language and including

traditional celebrations, songs, and stories (Gutierrez-Clellen, 1999; Kohnert, Yim, Nett, Fong Kan, & Duran, 2005). Increased engagement and participation by parents in preschool and school age programs that use cultural brokers and include parent generated literacy activities has been well documented. (Purcell-Gates et al., 2014). It was difficult to find any studies of very early intervention with the 0-3 populations of newcomers to the U.S. We can only hypothesize that the same holds true for the early intervention setting and anecdotal reports suggest that we are right. There is a dearth of empirical evidence regarding the use of traditional songs, games, and parenting techniques in early intervention for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their immigrant parents.

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## Appendix A

### Lucia and the Families She Visits

Lucia has been working with Spanish speaking families in the Charlotte, North Carolina area for the past 10 years. She was a Spanish-English Interpreter for the Early Intervention Program for Children who are Deaf or hard of hearing for three years.

### Observations of Teachers

When working as an interpreter she observed several teachers from Early Intervention in the home environments. When those teachers tried to teach English songs and games “to new arriving parents to the United States who were not yet acculturated or did not speak the language, parents did not follow through. The parents were not fully engaged and didn’t follow-up with activities.” Initially, this was attributed to three factors. (a) Families dealing with the trauma of suddenly finding themselves raising a child who was deaf or hard of hearing without having a frame of reference about hearing loss. (b) Families dealing with culture shock or struggling to acculturate while having strangers coming into their homes with a well-intentioned, but disability-focused agenda. (c) The intensity of early intervention services, which may be quite alien to these families, could have also been scary for them, which could have paralyzed or slowed down reaction/action time.

Providers sometimes erroneously interpreted this lack of participation by parents as being stubborn, uncooperative, or non-compliant. Many early intervention providers thought parents did not care about therapy or their children, in part because they didn’t understand the manner in which these families parented (Becker, 2014; Bentley, 2011; Guo, 2015; Roopnarine & Davidson, 2015).

Lucia reported, “Other teachers asked me to translate the songs and games and this worked better. Parents did learn the songs, rhymes, and games and used them but had a neutral rapport with their providers.” It was only when a few teachers asked Lucia to teach them traditional songs, games, and rhymes and asked for help with understanding appropriate behaviors, toys, or comments that the family finally bonded with their interventionists. The Early Interventionists commented on how they felt the family was participating more eagerly and that they had a better relationship with the Latino families.

### Assessing Family Culture

Lucia was asked by colleagues to observe them in their

work with parents: not just those from Spanish speaking countries, but also various newcomer parents from Pakistan to Burma with whom they were having trouble building rapport or obtaining joyful participation. Lucia first researched as much as she could about the family: appropriate behaviors of houseguests, views of teachers, important words such as *Hello*, *Good*, *Thank you*, and *Goodbye* in their language to let them know they were important and that she and the teacher valued their language and culture. A pre-session was conducted with interpreters being used in sessions. The interpreters were asked to repeat exactly what everyone said and to offer “no chit chat or opinions.” They were to act as a cultural broker only when there was a misunderstanding or a cultural issue that needed clarification. When interpreters were intimately familiar with a region, they were asked to share songs and games they might remember to share with the family.

After observing the providers, Lucia wrote recommendations based on what was the norm for that culture. Two good examples of norms that, when not followed, could cause barriers to a productive intervention relationship:

- For one Pakistani family a pig toy, a frequently used animal sound in early intervention, was perceived as dirty and insulting.
- A family from Burma expected the teacher to sit a bit higher than they were sitting.

These norms were learned through observation and conversation that gently probed to assess cultural expectations. It was vital to assess how families interacted with providers and each other, gender roles, household chore division, appropriate toys, celebrations, routines and family traditions, words that they felt provider should know and, of course, games, songs, and rhymes that were cherished by the family. Teachers reported that a good cultural analysis helped them to create better rapport with families and improved their service delivery.

### **Lucia as a Teacher**

When she first shifted from being an interpreter to an Early Intervention teacher working with Spanish speaking families, Lucia found it easier to use the translated songs she already had because they were tied to listening and language activities she had learned. She did not, initially, take into consideration the families’ various places of origin and the implications for each specific family culture. Only some of the families learned the songs and rhymes that were designed to promote language and infant development. Some parents did enjoy these songs and games, but others did not use them at all. Some parents expressed discomfort at showing how they used the songs and games during the week. This led to feeling constrained and not making a real connection with these families.

Based on the success of those teachers who had asked her to provide traditional songs and games that were

specific to the culture of specific households of new immigrants, Lucia began to research the culture of all of “her families.” She began to conduct an informal cultural assessment where she asked about each family’s values, routines, family dynamics, and health beliefs. Lucia specifically asked if they remembered any games, songs, or rhymes from their own childhoods. Some did and some said they did not. Lucia remembered songs and rhymes from her own country of origin, Ecuador, but found that immigrant families sometimes didn’t know her country’s songs and rhymes because their country had a different version or nothing even similar.

If the parents did not remember songs and games, Lucia made an effort to talk with extended family members, especially the elderly. Often grandparents still carried with them precious and invaluable traditional children songs, rhymes, stories, and games. These are intangible cultural resources that are sometimes lost because of migration. The elderly’s cultural oral libraries may be left behind as younger immigrants search for a better life. If the extended family was not in the picture, Lucia researched the family’s country of origin to learn games, stories, and nursery rhymes typical from the family’s country.

Using the cultural assessment information, and doing deep research, Lucia affirmed, “When I showed up with the games and songs I researched that were traditional from that culture, [parents’] faces lit up and they [said] things like ‘I remember that song from when I was a little girl, I love it! I want to teach it to my child.’” This led to a compilation of songs, rhymes, and games from different countries with their diverse versions according to each region. Parents were more receptive when she changed from using American songs in English or translated to Spanish to using their own traditional songs and games. The families she worked with began to participate more fully using their traditional songs and rhymes. Through these songs and rhymes, Lucia coached families on how to implement strategies for listening and spoken language skills as well as visual and manual language skill. These families “became savvy in teaching skills using traditional songs, games and rhymes and were better able to explain language strategies.” Parents were able to show how they used the songs and games to work on skills and better share what their children learned. Through observation, parental report, and seeing the joy on their faces when a song or rhyme resonates with their deep memories convinced the interventionist that the family was involved in the process.

When culturally responsive service is delivered in which the routines and traditions of the family, including songs and games, are used, the following can be observed:

1. Parents are thrilled to be asked about their culture. They freely and joyfully share the songs and games they are able to remember.
2. Grandparents and other older family members are incredible resources for obtaining traditional games,

- songs, and stories. Input from elderly relatives encourages collaboration within the extended family.
3. Rapport between early interventionist and family improves.
  4. Early interventionists gain a better understanding of the family, not just culturally but as a functioning bonded unit.
  5. Parents are more likely and eager to use the traditional stories, rhymes, songs, and games as listening and language activities.
  6. Although the initial intention was not to create a traditional cultural continuum for families, precious games and songs were rescued from loss and the importance of a family's cultural heritage was validated.

### **Pride and Engagement**

The families with whom Lucia adopted this approach were more engaged and participated more as team members with the early interventionist. When their cultural heritage was supported, they had a greater rapport with the provider compared to the families for whom adapted or translated games and songs from English to Spanish were utilized. However, using songs and stories in the family's native tongue, even if they are only translations of American songs, still provides better results than only using songs and games in the language of the host country. Further study of the most supportive and effective ways of working with families from different cultures is needed to describe the most effective ways of exploring the rich cultural resources families bring with them to the United States.

Insightful teachers must seek to elevate "teaching" beyond cultural sensitivity and into critical social constructivism. This type of connection with families can elicit wonderful stores of engaging knowledge that promotes child development, self-esteem, language, and literacy while honoring and preserving cultural and linguistic treasures.

### **Conclusions**

Although limited in scope and qualitative in nature, this individual account of success in Early Intervention with families who are recent newcomers to the United States suggests that interventionists can be prepared through pre-service or in-service training with tools and skills to help facilitate family engagement in Early Intervention with these newcomers. The use of informal or formal cultural assessment and research into each family's cultural background can help build rapport between interventionists and parents.

Songs, rhymes, and games that are a cherished part of family culture can provide a shared platform for enhancing the development of children who are deaf or hard of hearing during the important early years. However, if this is not possible, using songs and stories in the family's native tongue, even if they are only translations of American songs, still provides better results than only using songs and games in the language of the host

country. Additionally, collecting and sharing these cultural resources is valuable for promoting child development and for preservation of valuable cultural treasures. Further study of the use of language and culturally specific songs, rhymes, and games with infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families is recommended. Since empirical studies of recent immigrant groups in early intervention are scarce, additional studies with a deliberate focus on ways to positively engage these families are needed.

## **Appendix B**

### **Rhymes and Games for Infants and Toddlers**

The traditional games, songs, and rhymes presented here are a sample from a compilation by Lucia Quiñonez Sumner.

#### **Game**

##### **Aserrín Aserrán (Peruvian version)**

This is an old rhyme/game that Hispanic parents have played with their little children through generations. It was brought to Latin America by the Spaniards. Usually the parent sits the child in his/her lap facing himself/herself and then holds the child's hands or arms and rocks the child back and forth while singing the song. In some countries the parent tickles or kisses the child at the end of the rhyme. The McArthur Bates Communicative Development Inventories ask if a child knows this rhyme in "Games and Routines" under "Actions and Gestures." There are different versions in different countries. Here are two of the several versions.

##### **Version #1 (Peruvian versión)**

Aserrín, Acerrán  
 Los maderos de San Juan  
 Piden pan, No les dan  
 Piden queso menos eso  
 Piden vinos si les dan  
 Se marean y se van

##### **Translation**

Saw, saw,  
 The woodworkers of San Juan  
 They ask for bread  
 They get none  
 They ask for cheese, they get none  
 They ask or wine, they get some  
 They get dizzy and then go home (parents tickle child).

##### **Version #2 (Version de México, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, and certain areas in Spain)**

Aserrín, aserrán,  
 los maderos de San Juan,

piden pan, no les dan,  
piden queso les dan hueso  
y les cortan el pescuezo

### Translation

Saw, saw,  
The woodworkers of San Juan  
They ask for bread  
They get none  
They ask for cheese, they get a bone  
and their necks get cut off.

(at this point the parent either tickles the child's neck or lightly touches the child's neck simulating the neck cutting. This may seem crude to American sensibilities but it is a rhyme that has prevailed throughout generations and the passage of time like the American nursery rhyme Ring Around the Rosie).

### Finger Play

The following is a segment of a song from Spain that can be used as finger play,

Credits  
Writer(s): Ramon Ortiz Del Rivero  
Copyright: Southern Music Pub Co. Inc.  
Lyrics powered by [www.musiXmatch.com](http://www.musiXmatch.com)

### Hola Don Pepito

Hola Don Pepito  
Hola Don José  
Paso usted por mi casa  
Por su casa yo pasé  
Vio usted a mi abuela  
A su abuela yo la vi  
Adiós Don Pepito  
Adiós Don José

### Translation

Hello Don Pepito  
Hello Don Jose  
Did you drop by my house?  
I did just as you say.  
Did you see my grandma  
She's looking well today.  
Goodbye Don Pepito  
Good bye Don Jose

### Cinco lobitos

Cinco lobitos tenía la loba. Cinco lobitos detrás de la escoba. Cinco tenía, cinco criaba y a todos los cinco tetita les daba. Cinco lobitos tenía la loba. Cinco lobitos detrás de la escoba. Cinco lavó, cinco peinó y a todos ellos, a la escuela mandó.

### Translation

Five little pups had the Wolf. Five pups behind the broom. She had five, she raises five and to all five she gave milk. Five little pups had the Wolf. Five pups behind the broom. Five she bathed, five she combed, and all five she sent to school.

### Tortas, tortitas (A Latino traditional "Patty cake" game)

Tortas, tortitas que viene mama. Tortas, tortitas que pronto vendrá. Y trae un perrito que hace guau, guau. Palmas palmitas, que viene mama. Y trae una obeja que dice: baaa baaa.

### Translation

Pancake, Little pancake, mom is coming, pancake, pancake she will be here soon. She brings a doggie that goes woof woof. Clap clap mom is coming and brings a sheep that goes baaa-baaa.

### Song

**La Vaca** (A song created by Lucia Q. Sumner to the tune of London Bridge)

Tengo cuernos y hago mu  
hago mu, hago mu  
Yo doy leche y hago mu  
Mu, mu, mu, mu, mu

### Translation

The Cow  
I have horns and I say moo  
I say moo, I say moo  
I give milk and I say moo  
Moo moo moo