

# Inter-Relationships of Depressive Symptoms & Acculturation in Latina Mothers & Infant Socio-Emotional Health

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## ALAS (Wings) Project

(EHS Latina Mothers: Reducing Depressive Symptoms and Improving Infant/Toddler Mental Health)

**Funding:** DHHS/Administration for Children and Families/Administration for Child Youth and Family Early Head Start University Partnership Grant (90YF0042/01)

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**EHS Partners:** Orange County Early Head Start, Chapel Hill, NC; Asheville City Schools Early Head Start Program, Asheville, NC; Western Carolina Community Action Early Head Start, Hendersonville, NC

### Intervention Theory

Interpersonal Theory of Nursing (Peplau; Beeber) and Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) (Weissman; Klerman)

### Intervention

Self-efficacy building through improved interpersonal relationships, resolution of life issues, effective parenting despite depressive symptoms and symptom management

### Design

Randomized 2-group experimental design using repeated measures of outcomes at baseline, 14 weeks, 22 weeks and 26 weeks)

### Sample

80 symptomatic, monolingual Spanish-speaking Latina EHS mothers with infants or toddlers between 6 weeks and 30 months old.

### Outcomes

Reduction in maternal depressive symptoms; improvement in maternal-child interactions, infant/toddler social-emotional competence and use of EHS Services

### Mediators

Maternal self-efficacy

### Moderators of Intervention Effect

Maternal attributes and maternal burden

Depressive symptoms are prevalent and severe in low-income, newly-immigrated, monolingual Spanish-speaking mothers who are beginning to acculturate into the USA. These symptoms may limit maternal responsiveness, increase the mother and child's isolation and reduce their use of Early Head Start (EHS), a powerful source of positive acculturation.

The ALAS project tests an innovative, in-home, EHS compatible, mental health intervention designed to improve the mental health and parenting of Latina mothers with significant depressive symptoms and the well-being of their infants/toddlers. The intervention uses psychiatric-mental health advanced practice nurses and bilingual EHS staff trained as interventionist-interpreter teams.

The ALAS Project-Extension complements the ALAS project by describing the parenting practices of Latina mothers without depressive symptoms and the well-being of their infants/toddlers. It also provides the ALAS project with comparative data on factors that may contribute to depressive symptoms and influence the effectiveness of the ALAS project intervention.

## ALAS (Wings) Project – Extension

(EHS: Immigrant Parenting, Acculturation, and Infant/Toddler Well-Being)

**Funding:** Foundation for Child Development, Changing Faces of America, Young Scholars Program

**Principal Investigator:** Krista Perreira, PhD, Department of Public Policy

### Significance

Add to the small body of existing literature on how Latina mothers parent their infants and toddlers while acculturating to life in the United States.

### Research Objectives

Describe and compare low-income Latina mothers with and without clinically significant levels of depressive symptoms in terms of:

- ♦ Parenting behaviors (i.e., maternal involvement, positive attention, negative control, developmental stimulation and maternal contingency)
- ♦ Interaction behaviors of their infants [0-12 months] and toddlers [13-36 months] (infant/toddler developmental maturity, irritability, social interaction and social-emotional competence)
- ♦ Risk and protective factors such as maternal self-efficacy, maternal burden, maternal demographic characteristics, acculturation, and migration experiences.

### Sample

25 symptomatic and 25 asymptomatic, monolingual Spanish-speaking EHS Latina mothers with infants or toddlers between 6 weeks and 30 months old

### Data

- ♦ Structured interviews with mothers to collect data on depressive symptoms, parenting behaviors, infant-toddler interactions, use of early head start services, maternal self-efficacy, maternal burden, maternal demographic characteristics, acculturation & social-emotional competence
- ♦ One forty-five minute video of unstructured, naturalistic maternal-child interactions

### Results

Mothers symptomatic for depression will:

- ♦ Show significantly more difficulty in parenting behaviors
- ♦ Have children with more compromised social-emotional competence
- ♦ Report significantly less use of Early Head Start services, lower sense of maternal self-efficacy, greater maternal burden, and less acculturation