



LATINO FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACROSS PRESCHOOL TYPES: A COMPARISON OF HEAD START AND PUBLIC PRESCHOOL

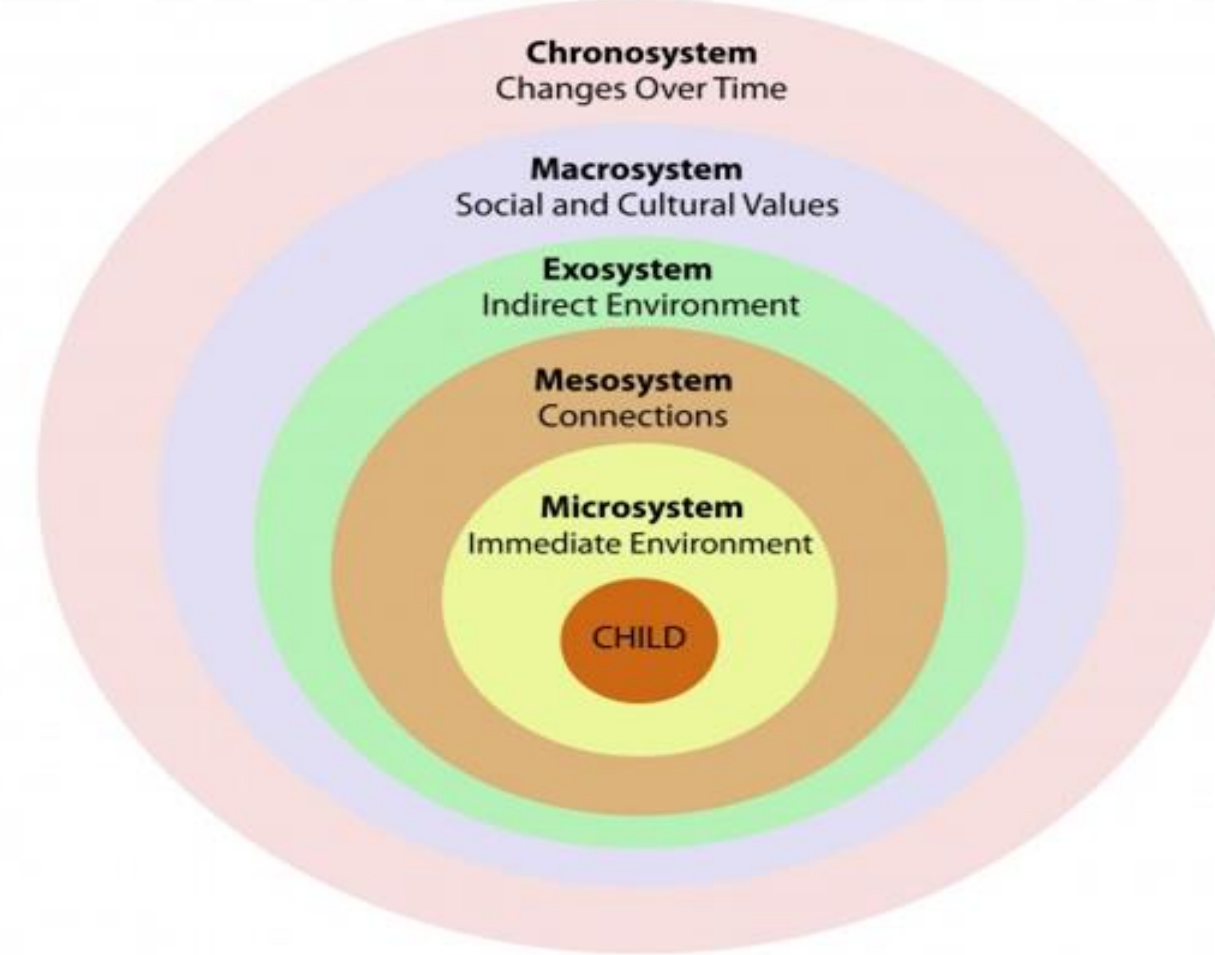


Julianne Pelegrino
Pawling High School, NYU-L-FELD

THEORY & BACKGROUND LITERATURE

BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL THEORY

- Proposes that children's immediate and distal environments, as well as their interactions are key contributors to their development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998)
- Immediate environments are those that contain the child, such as the home or the classroom. As such, they have direct effect on the developing child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998)
- However, the connections between microsystems, such as the home and the school, are also critical for children's optimal development (i.e., the mesosystem)(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998)



HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS THROUGH FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Family engagement is construct that embodies the connection between home and school; it is defined as the various ways primary caregivers support their children's educational learning (McWayne & Melzi, 2014), as such it contributes to school success .
- Family engagement acts as a protective factor against the stressors of poverty and therefore helps decrease existing academic disparities between children from low-income and those from more affluent communities (e.g., McWayne, Melzi, Limlingan & Schick, 2016).
- Most of the existing wok on family engagement has focused on school-aged children and the educational efforts to encourage family engagement has also targeted this age population.

FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT IN FAMILIES WITH PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

- Given the national-level initiatives to increase preschool education, understanding the best ways to foster family engagement earlier is becoming critical, in particular for low-income families from immigrant backgrounds as the preschool years are often their first contact with the U.S. educational system (McWayne & Melzi, 2014).
- In NY state, children from immigrant, low-income communities often attend preschool through federally or state-funded initiatives, such as Head Start (i.e., the largest federally funded early childhood program serving children from low income) or local public schools. (US Department of Education)
- These two educational settings have diverging ways of approaching work with children and families.



HEAD START

Developed on Bronfenbrenner's theory of child development (i.e., whole child approach).

Focus on child's academic wellbeing as well as parents own development (two-generation approach).



PUBLIC PRESCHOOL

Focus on child's wellbeing over that of parents.

However, there is "the family and community engagement team" whose goal is to expand efforts to support families engagement practices in education.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Given the limited research on family engagement during the preschool years and especially of low-income immigrant families, the present study examined the engagement patterns of Latino families whose children attend preschools in New York City.
- The main research question was: Are there differences in the levels of engagement between families whose children attend Head Start versus those who attend public preschool?
- I hypothesized that parents whose children attend Head Start will show higher levels of family engagement.

METHOD

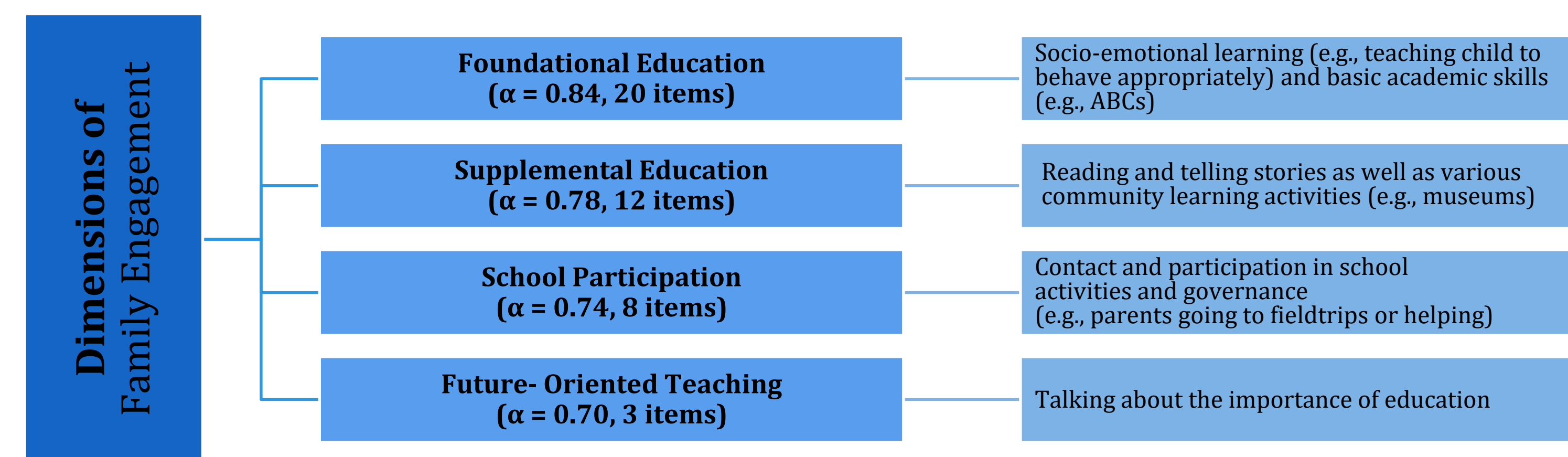
PARTICIPANTS

- Data were drawn from a larger study investigating Latino children's language and literacy development (Melzi, Schick & Scarola, 2018).
- 172 primary caregivers (97% parents) were selected from 4 Head Start centers (n = 89) and 3 public school preschools (n = 83) serving mostly (> 65%) children from Latino immigrant backgrounds and low-income communities in New York City.
- Primary caregivers had a mean age of 32.41, ranging from 20-72 years of age. On average they had a high school education (M = 11.6 years; SD = 4.37). About 50% had daughters.

Demographic Characteristic	Percentage Outcome
Employment	46% full time
	20% part time
	33% does not work outside the home
Home Language	39.5% Spanish
	17.4% English
	43% Spanish-English bilingual
Country of Origin	33% Dominican Republic
	15% Mexico
	33% United States
	21% Other Latin American countries
Amount of people living with child	M=3.81 (SD= 1.45)

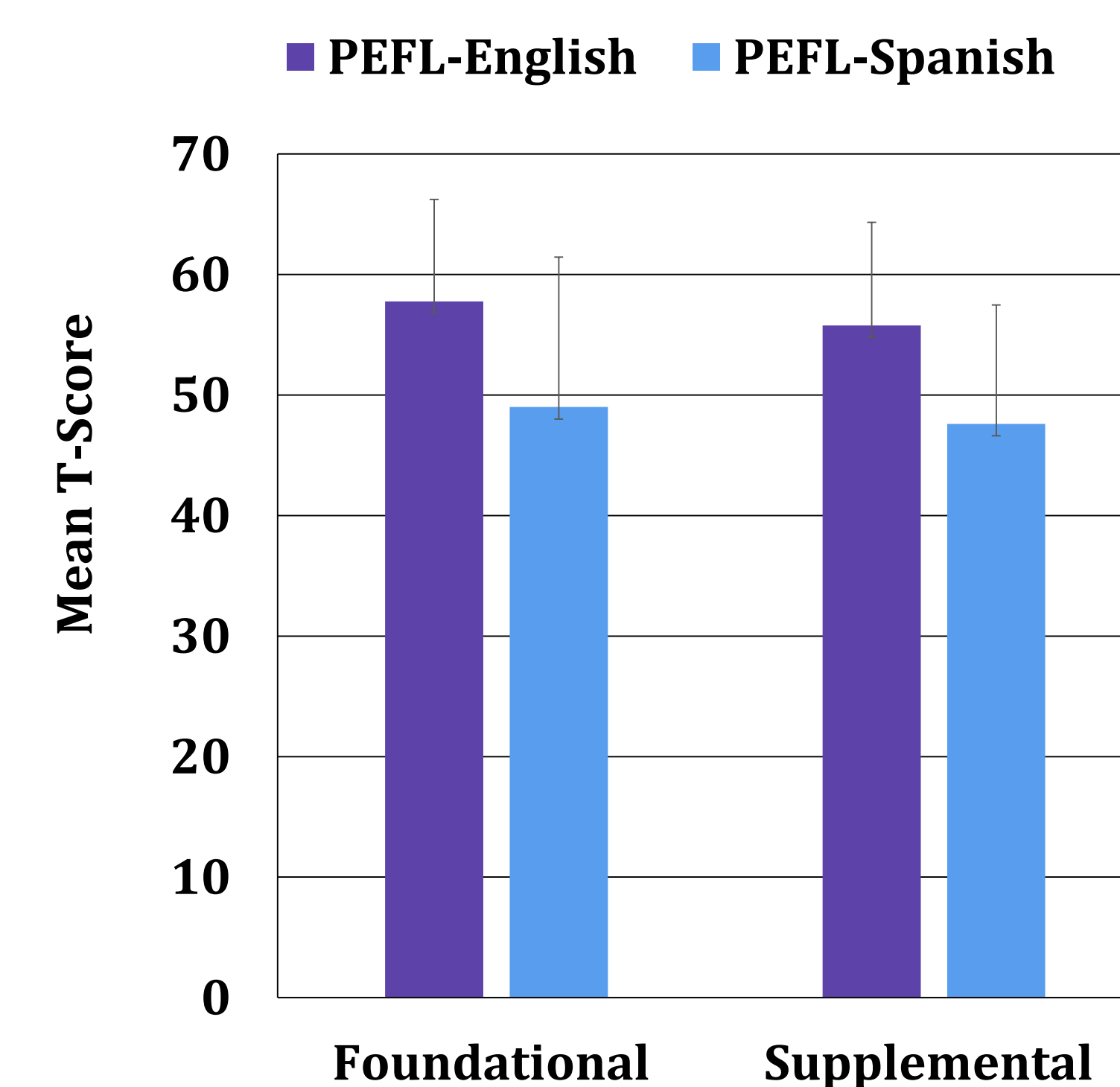
PROCEDURE & MEASURES

- As part of the larger project, folders containing various forms were sent to parents via children's backpacks.
- For the purpose of the study, data from two sources were used:
 - Demographic Questionnaire that asked parents' age, number of years of formal education, employment, amount of people living with the PreK-child, child's age and gender, country of origin and home language.
 - Family Engagement measured through the completion of *Parental Engagement of Families from Latino Backgrounds* (PEFL-English) or *Participación Educativa de Familias Latinas* (PEFL-Spanish; McWayne & Melzi, 2014) which consists of 43 questions rates rated on a 4-point likert scale.



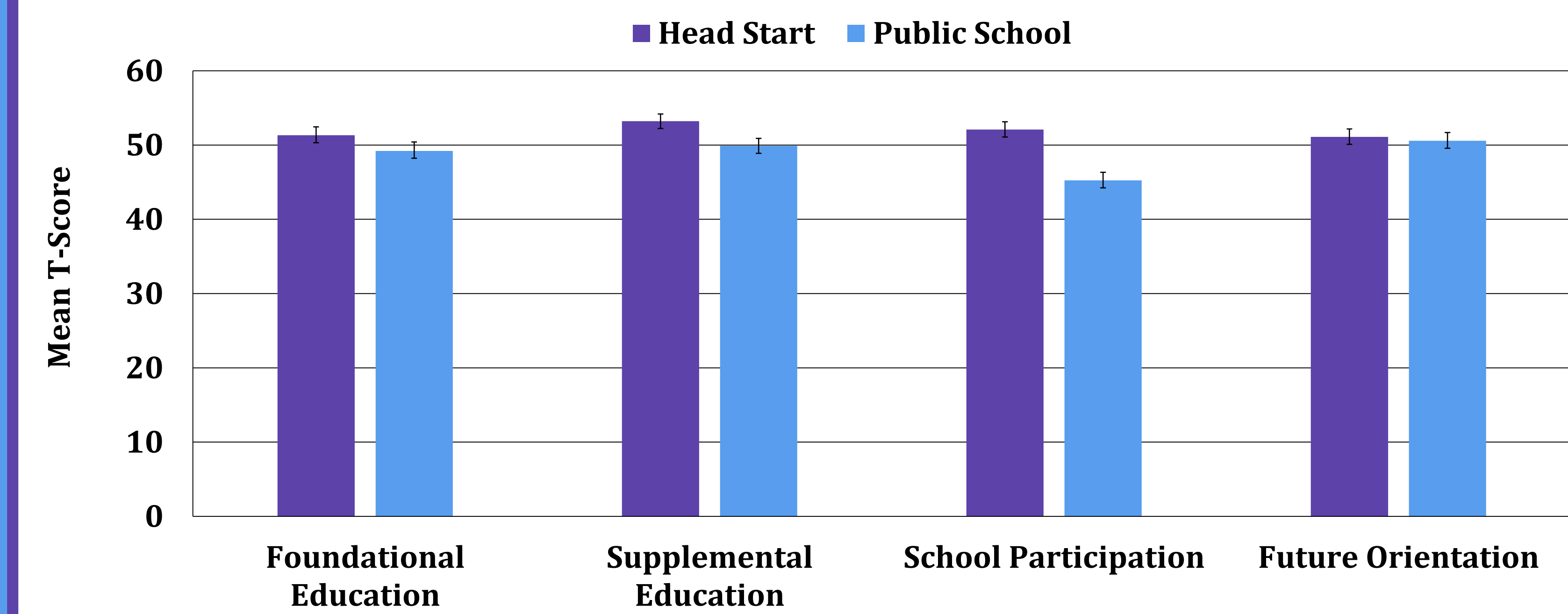
RESULTS

- The first set of analyses examined whether any demographic variables needed to be controlled.
- Results showed differences by language preference ($F(1, 166) = 32.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$), such that caregivers who completed the PEFL-English showed higher levels of supplemental education as compared to parents who completed the PEFL-Spanish.
- In addition, years of caregivers' formal education was positively and significantly related to two family engagement dimensions: foundational ($r = .19, p < .05$) and supplemental ($r = .33, p < .00$) engagement.



RESULTS

- The second set of analyses answered the main research question through a multivariate analyses of covariance using family engagement dimensions as dependent variables, and site type as a fixed variable, and with years of education and language preference as covariates.
- Results showed that family engagement levels differed significantly across site type ($F(4, 160) = 5.72, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$), in particular supplemental ($F(1, 163) = 5.73, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$) and school participation ($F(1, 163) = 20.15, p < .00, \eta^2 = .11$)



Conclusion

- Findings of research
 - First set of analysis:
 - Caregivers who completed the PEFL-English showed higher levels of supplemental education as compared to parents who completed the PEFL-Spanish
 - years of caregivers' formal education was positively and significantly related to foundational and supplemental engagement.
 - Second set of analysis:
 - Family engagement levels differed significantly across site type in supplemental education and school participation

HYPOTHESIS

Parents whose children attend Head Start will show higher levels of family engagement.

HYPOTHESIS SUPPORTED

Head Start caregivers showed higher levels of two dimensions of family engagement: supplemental and school participation.

DISCUSSION/ FUTURE RESEARCH

- Results of the current study suggest that adopting a two-generation, whole child approach is supportive of the family engagement practices of immigrant families from low-income communities. Head Start families support literacy and community learning, as well as participate more in school activities as compared to non-Head Start caregivers.
- It might be that the Head Start approach creates a more welcoming environment or that the workshops and family programming works particularly well for low-income immigrant families, thereby supporting family engagement practices.

IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Findings are a first step towards evaluating what school-based factors that support family engagement practices.

Future Research

Since differences were small I would like to do a longitudinal study to see if family engagement levels will change or not

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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