

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



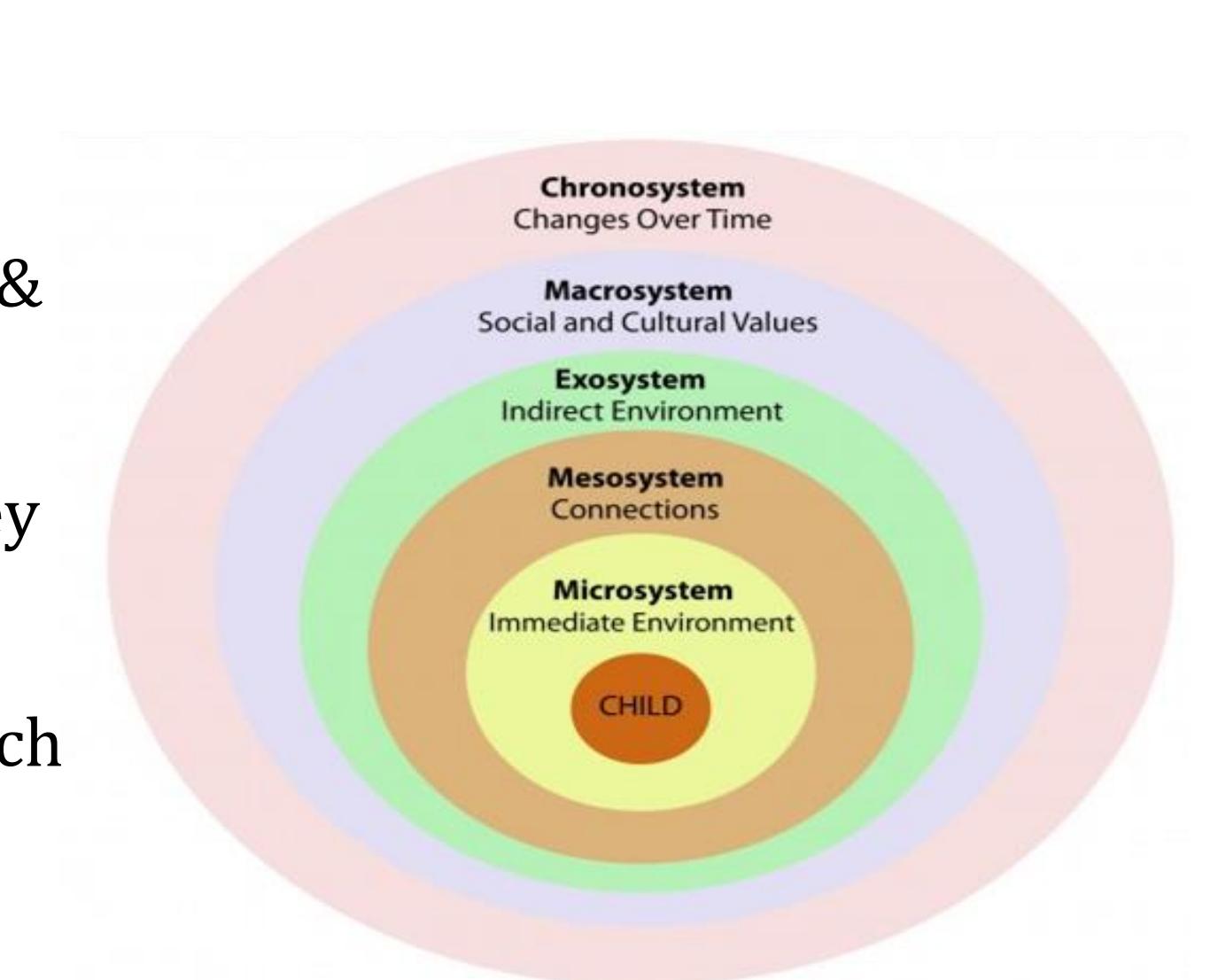
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THEORY & BACKGROUND LITERATURE

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 work 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

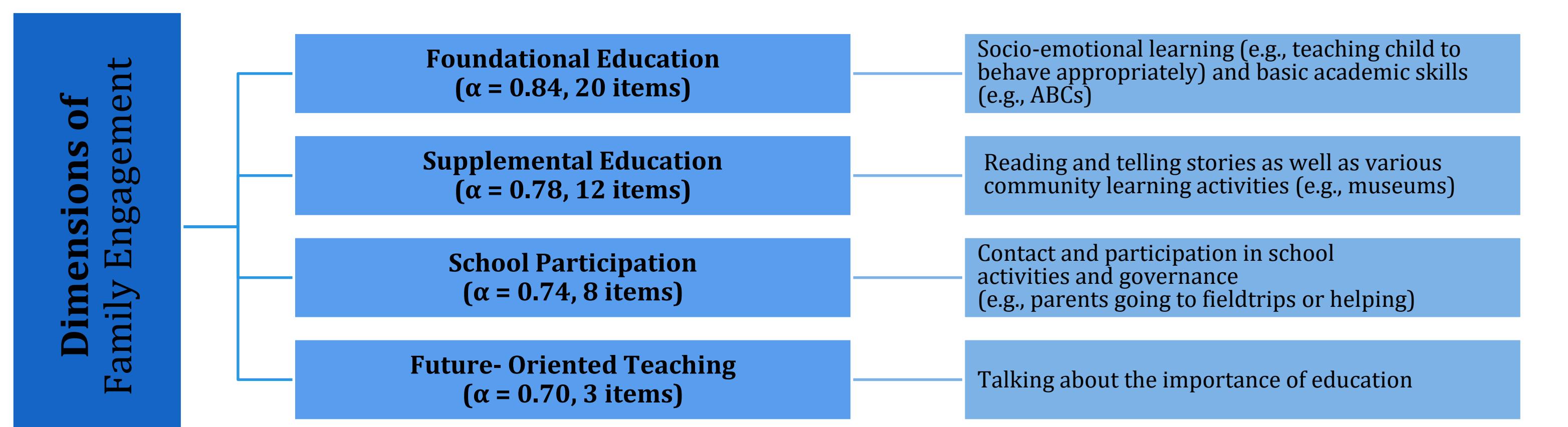
PARTICIPANTS

- 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	$M=3.81$ ($SD=1.45$)

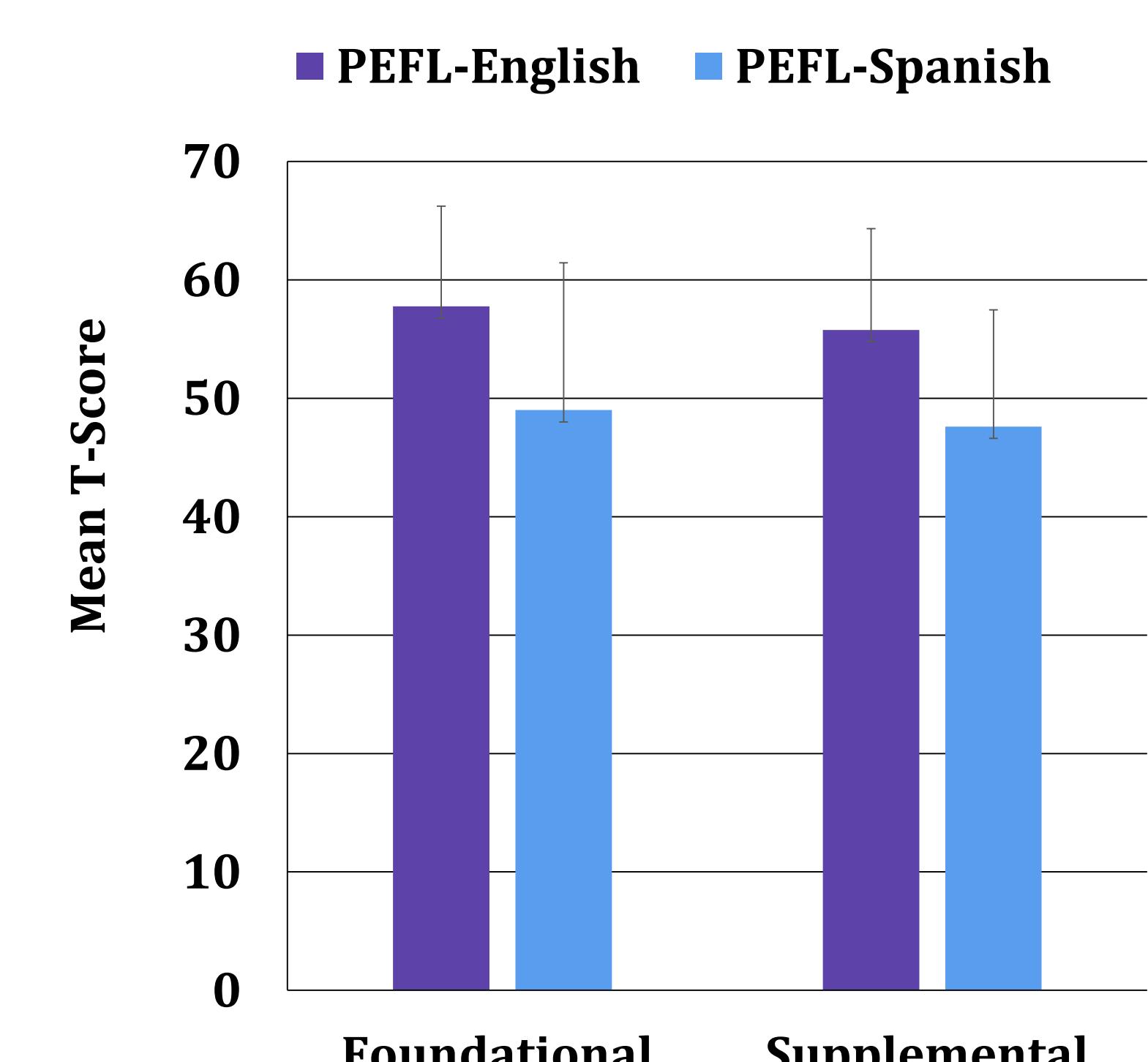
PROCEDURE & MEASURES

- 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 rated on a 4-point likert scale.



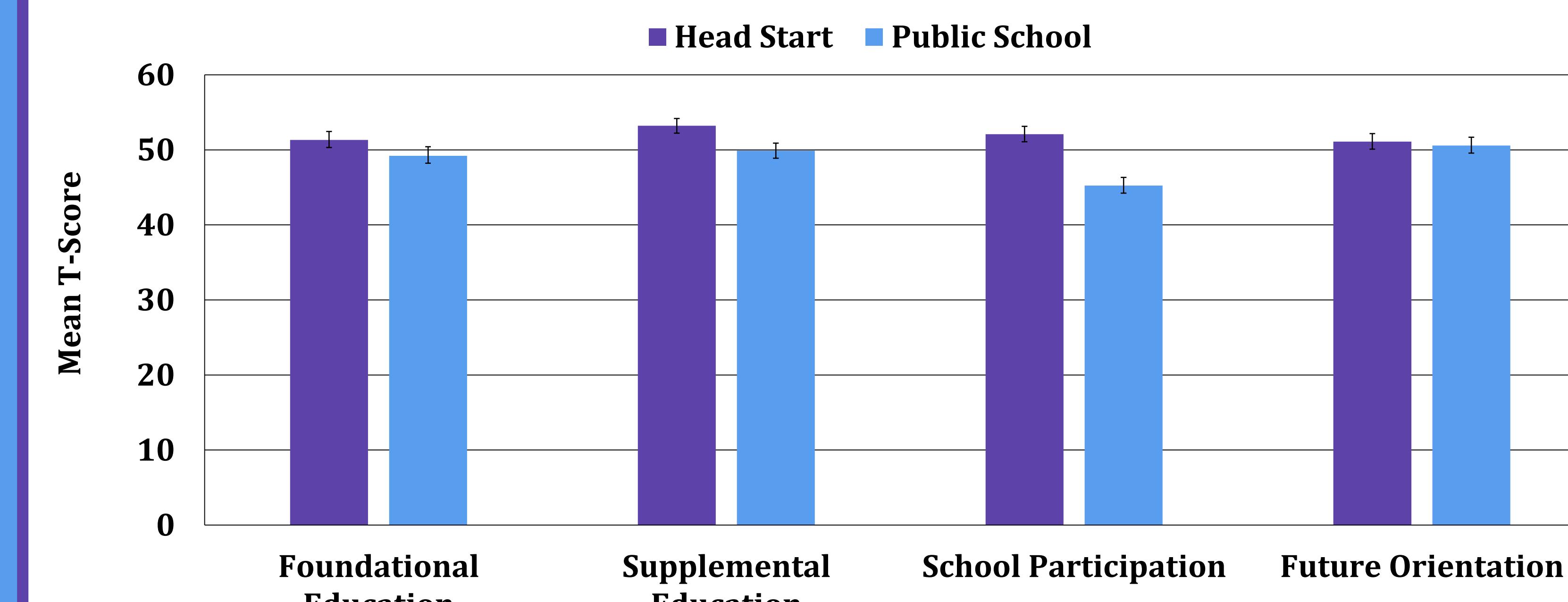
RESULTS

- 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.



- 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.

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