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What School Readiness Skills are Most Important to Immigrant Parents? A Comparison Across Groups

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Context

- Early childhood is critical for developing important school-related foundational skills (e.g., Diamond et al., 2000; Jung, 2016).
- 27% of children are from immigrant families, representing an increase of 51% over the last 15 years (Child Trends, 2018).
- Studies have shown wide variability in school readiness skills of children of immigrants (Crosnoe & Fuligni, 2012), with patterns of academic skills at age five based on parents’ region of origin (Koury & Votruba-Drzal, 2013).
- Grounded in sociocultural theory, parents’ beliefs about school readiness are related to their children’s academic success (e.g., Barbarin et al., 2010; Piotrkowski et al., 2000).
- Numerous studies that include racially/ethnically diverse families have been conducted on what parents think are important school readiness skills (e.g., Barbarin et al., 2010; Piotrkowski et al., 2000; Puccioni, 2015), but they rarely explicitly include immigrant parents. As such, we know little about what immigrant parents believe are important school readiness skills.

Study Purpose

The study aim was to investigate (a) what Chinese and Latinx immigrant parents, primarily Dominican and El Salvadoran, believe are the most and least important skills necessary for their children’s academic success, and (b) what demographic factors are related to these beliefs.

Method

Participants

- 64 parents of preschool children who identity as 1st or 2nd generation immigrants from China, Dominican Republic (DR) or El Salvador (ES).
- 22 parents from China (10 boys, 12 girls; M = 4.38 years, SD = 0.76)
 - 91% 1st generation; Most (69%) primarily spoke Mandarin in the home
 - Highest level of education: 77% attained Bachelor’s Degree or higher
- 20 parents from DR (15 boys, 5 girls; M = 4.49 years, SD = 0.75)
 - 85% 1st generation; Most (75%) primarily spoke Spanish in the home
 - Highest level of education: 65% high school diploma/GED or vocational training/some college but no degree
- 22 parents from ES (6 boys, 16 girls; M = 4.47 years; SD = 0.65 years)
 - 82% 1st generation; Most (82%) primarily spoke Spanish in the home
 - Highest level of education: 82% high school diploma/GED or vocational training/some college but no degree

Measures & Procedures

- Two interviews were conducted with each parent, approximately 1 week apart.
- Demographic information: Adapted from CECER-DLL (Hammer et al., 2015)
- Acculturation measure: adapted from the Acculturation Measure for Mexican Americans (Cuéllar, Arnold & Maldonado, 1995)
- Qsort: Parents were asked to categorize 36 skills adapted from National Education Goals Panel. Parents ranked skills into 4 groups in order of importance (9 skills per importance group; 1 = Least Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very Important)
 - Social- emotional (6 items; e.g., *Gets along well with others, Takes turns*)
 - Academic (8 items; e.g., *Knows how to: count to 20, write name*)
 - Language (5 items; e.g., *Can communicate well in: L1, L2; Has good vocabulary*)
 - Approaches to learning (8 items; e.g., *Shows independence, Eager to learn*)
 - School-related behaviors (4 items; e.g., *Uses materials carefully*)
 - Motor skills (5 items; e.g., *Holds pencil to write, Stacks blocks*)

Method Continued

Analytic Approach

- Descriptive Analyses
- Q-factor using principal components extraction and varimax rotation used to create profiles. Loadings above .32 were considered to be meaningful (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).
- Logistic regression used to predict profile membership
 - IVs: child age, parental education level, country of origin, acculturation with country of origin, acculturation with U.S.

Results

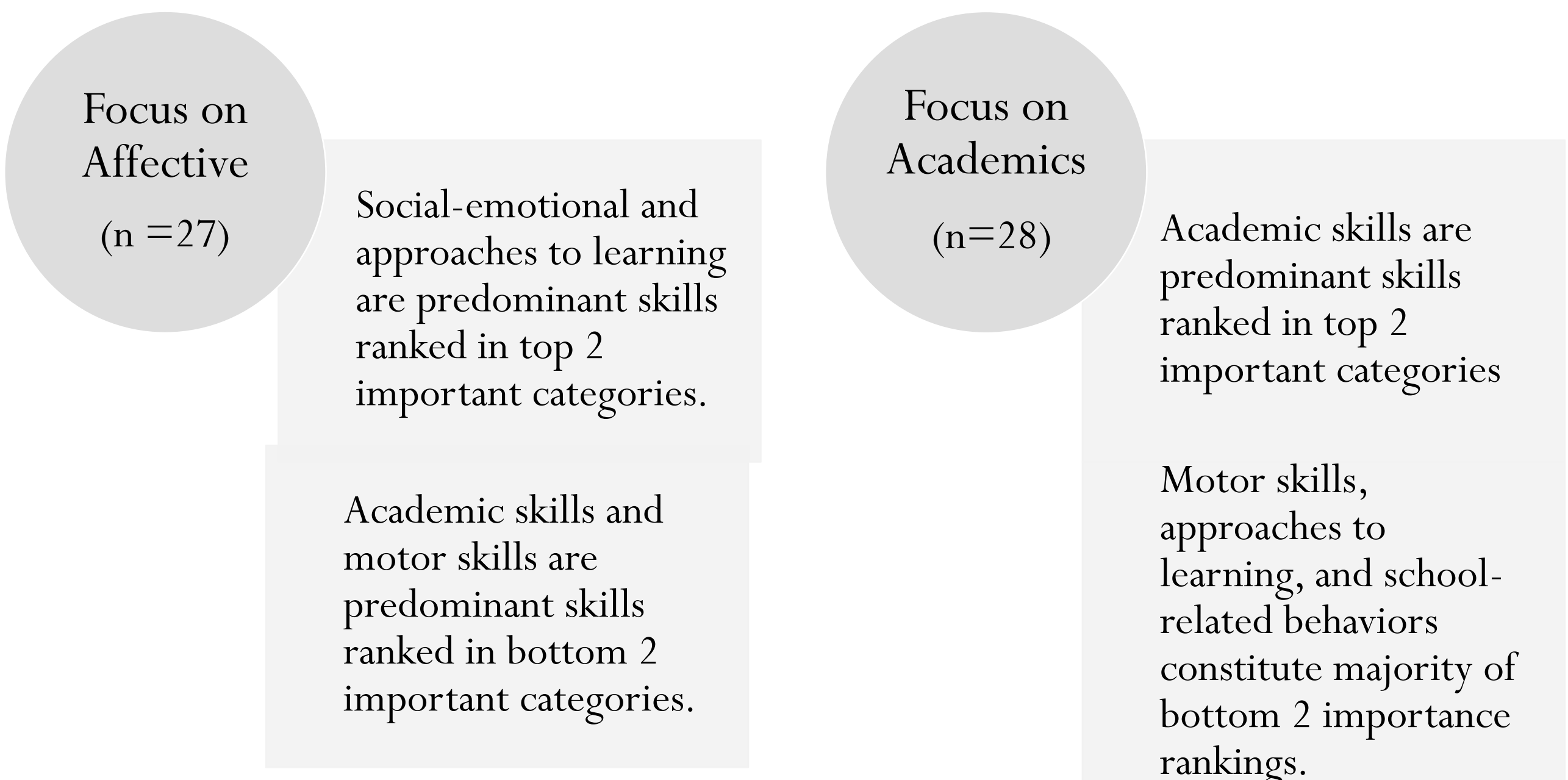
Highest Rated School Readiness Skills

| Chinese Parents | Dominican Parents | Salvadoran Parents |
|---|--|---|
| Shows respect for others (M = 3.78; SD = 0.42) | Shows respect for others (M = 3.50; SD = 0.95) | Shows respect for others (M = 3.59; SD = 0.73) |
| Is self-confident (M = 3.70; SD = 0.70) | Communicates well in English (M = 3.26; SD =1.15) | Uses good manners (M = 3.23; SD = 0.92) |
| Gets along with others (M = 3.55; SD = .67) | Uses good manners (M = 3.25; SD = 1.02) | Shows independence (M = 3.23; SD = 0.92) |
| Uses good manners (M = 3.48; SD = 0.59) | Is self-confident (M = 3.25; SD = 0.85) | Knows the name of colors (M =3.18; SD = 0.85) |
| Knows right from wrong (M = 3.36; SD = 0.79) | Obedient (M = 3.21; SD = 1.03) | Expresses wants/needs in words (M = 3.09; SD = 0.75) |

Lowest Rated School Readiness Skills

| Chinese Parents | Dominican Parents | Salvadoran Parents |
|---|--|--|
| Can rhyme words (M = 1.32; SD = 0.72) | Uses scissors (M = 1.29; SD = 0.56) | Stacks blocks (M = 1.27; SD = 0.63) |
| Stacks blocks (M =1.36; SD = 0.49) | Stacks blocks (M =1.40; SD = 0.60) | Uses scissors (M = 1.55; SD = 0.91) |
| Uses materials carefully (M = 1.45; SD = .60) | Can rhyme words (M = 1.60; SD = 0.94) | Can rhyme words (M = 1.55; SD = 0.80) |
| Jumps, kicks, throws (M = 1.52; SD = 0.59) | Jumps, kicks, throws (M = 1.67; SD = 0.97) | Uses materials carefully (M = 1.77; SD = 0.97) |
| Knows how to read a few words (M =1.59; SD = 0.80) | Can recognize patterns (M= 1.74; SD = 0.81) | Knows how to read a few words (M=1.86; SD = 1.17) |

Parent Profiles: School Readiness Skills



Results Continued

Predictors of School Readiness Profiles

| Predictor | B (SE) | p |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|------|
| Child Age | -1.17 (0.58) | .05 |
| Parent Education | -0.02 (0.27) | .94 |
| DR: Country of Origin | -3.89 (1.32) | .003 |
| El Salvador: Country of Origin | -4.26 (1.24) | .001 |
| Acculturation with Country of Origin | 0.02 (0.03) | .47 |
| Acculturation with U.S. | 0.01 (0.03) | .37 |

Logistic Regression Summary

- While controlling for the other variables in the model:
- Child age significantly predicted parent school readiness profile.
 - Parents of younger children were more likely to be in Affective Profile, whereas parents of older children were more likely to be Academic Profile.
- Country of origin significantly predicted parent school readiness profile.
 - Immigrant Chinese parents were more likely to be in the Affective Profile, whereas both immigrant Dominican and El Salvadoran parents were more likely to be in the Academic profile.
- Parent education and acculturation were not significant predictors.

Discussion

- These findings:
- Increase our understanding of what skills immigrant parents believe are important for school readiness.
 - Highlight the greater importance that parents of all groups placed on social-emotional skills and approaches to learning compared to other school readiness skills.
 - Highlight the lesser importance that parents of all groups placed on motor skills compared to other school readiness skills.
 - Increase our understanding of different profiles of school readiness beliefs
 - Show the need to consider immigrant parents as a heterogeneous group.

- Limitations and Future Directions
- Sample predominantly 1st generation and limited to only 3 immigrant groups from 2 geographic areas.
 - It is important to consider the nature of the schools that the children attend (Carter & Welner, 2013; Glick & Bates, 2010).
 - Next step: How do parents’ skill priorities from the Qsort relate to their responses from a semi-structured interview?
 - Future direction: How do parents’ skill priorities relate to child skills?

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