

When Teachers' and Parents' Values Differ: Teachers' Ratings of Academic Competence in Children From Low-Income Families

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The authors examined predictors of teachers' ratings of academic competence of 105 kindergarten children from low-income families. Teachers rated target children's expected competence in literacy and math and completed questions about their perceptions of congruence–dissonance between themselves and the child's parents regarding education-related values. Independent examiners assessed children's literacy and math skills. Teachers' instructional styles were observed and rated along dimensions of curriculum-centered and student-centered practices. Controlling for children's skills and socioeconomic status, teachers rated children as less competent when they perceived value differences with parents. These patterns were stronger for teachers who exhibited curriculum-centered, rather than student-centered, practices. The findings suggest a mechanism by which some children from low-income families enter a path of diminished expectations.

Children from low-income families typically begin their school experience with fewer academic skills than their middle-income peers (Lee & Burkam, 2002), and they remain on a path of relatively low performance (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Denton & West, 2002; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). A range of explanations are offered for the performance discrepancies associated with family socioeconomic status (SES). Family and community influences are implicated in some research; other studies suggest that systematic differences in school resources, including the quality of teachers, further disadvantage low-income children (Augenblick, Myers, & Anderson, 1997; Betts, Rueben, & Danenberg, 2000; Parrish & Fowler, 1995; Unnever, Kerckhoff, & Robinson, 2000).

Many researchers and policymakers contend also that teachers expect less of children from low-income and other stigmatized groups and therefore provide less rigorous academic instruction and lower standards for achievement. Consistent with this view, relatively low expectations exist in many schools serving low-income students (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Hallinger &

Murphy, 1986; Kennedy, 1995; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990; McLoyd, 1998). Kennedy (1995), for example, analyzed data on the academic climate of 250 third-grade classrooms in a stratified sample of 76 schools in Louisiana. The proportion of low-income students was strongly negatively correlated with teachers' perceptions of students' ability. Although the SES of the student body was also a strong predictor of academic norms (i.e., peer support for academic performance), the peer norm differences disappeared when teacher expectations entered into the regression analysis. In addition to lower expectations for academic performance, teachers perceive children from low-SES families as being less mature and having poorer self-regulatory skills than their peers (McLoyd, 1998). In a study of first graders from low-SES families, for example, Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson (1987) found that teachers from higher status backgrounds gave more adverse evaluations of the maturity of minority and low-SES-status children as well as held lower expectations for their academic performance.

Although the methods typically used to study teacher-expectation effects have been criticized (e.g., Babad, 1993; Brophy, 1983), teacher expectations for student performance do influence teachers' behavior toward students and students' learning (Jussim & Eccles, 1992; Jussim, Eccles, & Madon, 1996; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; see Stipek, 2002; Wigfield & Harold, 1992, for reviews). Children who typically receive relatively low expectations may be the most affected by teacher expectations. Jussim et al. (1996) provided evidence that teacher-expectancy effects are stronger among stigmatized groups, such as African Americans, children from families with low SES, and to a lesser extent, girls. In a study of low-income African American students, Gill and Reynolds (2000) found that teacher expectations had a powerful direct influence on academic achievement. Thus, children in stigmatized groups are both prone to more adverse expectations by teachers and also are more likely to have such expectations lead to self-fulfilling prophecies of poor academic

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performance. Low expectations in particular are likely to have sustaining effects on children's performance.

Teacher expectations appear to be particularly important in the early elementary grades. In their classic study, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) found that the first and second graders, but not the older children in the study, evidenced teachers' self-fulfilling prophecies. Kuklinski and Weinstein (2001), likewise, reported that teacher expectancies accentuated achievement differences to a greater extent in the early elementary grades than in the later elementary grades. And in a meta-analytic review, Raudenbush (1984) found teacher expectancies to produce their greatest effects on children in the early grades, but also noted an effect in seventh grade. Jussim et al. (1996) suggested that children may be most vulnerable to teacher-expectation effects at key transition points, such as school entry or change of school (as often occurs in seventh grade), rather than at a particular developmental age per se.

Given the effects of teacher expectations on student learning, it is important to understand what factors influence teacher judgments about students' academic competence. One robust finding is that teacher expectations are strongly associated with children's actual skills (Brophy, 1983; Jussim & Eccles, 1992; Jussim et al., 1996; Wigfield, Galper, Denton, & Seefeldt, 1999). Jussim et al. (1996) maintained that children's skill levels influence teachers' expectations, which in turn affect children's future performance. Thus, children's school performance becomes part of a cycle of increasing or decreasing expectations, which, in turn, leads to future performance. Consistent with this view, when children's skills are considered, the statistical effects of teacher expectations on student learning are diminished. Teacher expectations, nevertheless, predict student achievement, even with students' previous achievement held constant (Jussim et al., 1996; Kuklinski & Weinstein, 2001), suggesting that other factors enter into teacher judgments and that teacher judgments affect students' learning regardless of whether they are based on students' academic skills.

In brief, young, low-income children and young children of color may be particularly vulnerable to negative effects of teacher expectations. These effects may be especially powerful as children make the transition into school. Accordingly, this study focused on kindergarten children from various ethnic groups, living in low-income families.

Not all young children from low-income families perform poorly, however, and not all teachers expect poor performance from such children. Less is known about the sources of bias in teachers' judgments. For example, researchers have not tried to explain why teachers perceive children from low-income families to be less academically competent and what factors contribute to variation in teachers' perceptions of children from low-income families. The purpose of this investigation was to assess possible predictors of teacher expectations of students from low-income families. Specifically, we assessed the extent to which family SES and teachers' perceptions of value differences between themselves and students' parents explain variation in teacher perceptions and expectations of students' academic competence. Further, we investigated whether such variation exists in classrooms with distinctly different styles of instructional practice.

Teacher–Parent Value Differences

Most teachers in low-income communities differ from the families in those communities in terms of educational background and ethnicity (Alexander et al., 1987). Much has been written about the potential negative consequences for children of a mismatch between the culture of the school and the culture of their families (e.g., Delpit, 1995; Ogbu, 1993). But this literature focuses on children's experience of cultural differences. In contrast, teachers' perceptions of the values inherent in cultural and socioeconomic differences and the effects of these perceptions on their judgments of children have not been studied. We focus here on values that are directly related to education—effective teaching practices, classroom discipline, and parent involvement in children's learning (Okagaki & French, 1998; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993).

Parents hold particular ethnotheories about raising their children (Super & Harkness, 1997), and their perspectives may differ substantially from those of teachers. For example, beliefs about appropriate parenting practices and ways to interact with schools vary according to ethnic identity (Ogbu, 1993) and social class (Lareau, 1987). According to Weisner, Gallimore, and Jordan (1988), the scripts used by participants in teaching and learning contexts reflect belief systems, which differ by ethnocultural group. Because teachers often have children from diverse cultural groups within one classroom, they need to become familiar with a range of cultural scripts and underlying belief systems. This may pose a difficult challenge for some teachers. For example, Lasky (2000) found that teachers were more comfortable with parents who shared a similar value system to their own and often became demoralized, angry, and discouraged with parents who did not share the same values.

Children are presumably disadvantaged when their parents and teachers hold different values with respect to desired classroom practices and behavior. One negative consequence of such a mismatch may be lowered teacher expectations. Teachers may reason, for example, that parents who do not share the teachers' views of appropriate child rearing and teaching will fail to provide the support that children need to learn effectively. As a result, teachers may (even unknowingly) lower their expectations of the school achievement of such children. Therefore, in this study, we assessed associations between teachers' perceptions of education-related value differences between themselves and parents and their perception of the children's current and future academic competencies. Values related to teaching academic subjects (math, reading, and writing) and discipline were selected because teachers' attention is largely focused on these domains, and they are frequently discussed in parent–teacher conferences. The issue of parents' role in assisting their child in schoolwork was also included because it is a common source of conflict or confusion (Baker, 1997; Linek, Rasinski, & Harkins, 1997).

Even within a sample of low-income families, there may be considerable variation in the degree to which parents' values differ from teachers. We suspected, however, that perceptions of value differences might be confounded with parents' SES. Perceived value differences are not the only reason why teachers may have relatively low expectations for the academic success of children from low-SES families. For example, they may assume that the lower the children's SES is, the more stress there is on the family, or the less stable and more crowded home conditions are. To be

able to examine the independent predictive value of perceived value differences, we also included a measure of SES.

Classroom Practices

Teachers may vary in the degree to which their expectations for students are affected by their perception of discrepant values. Teachers who are sensitive to individual differences and adjust instruction and discipline to individual children's skills, learning styles, and interests may not view differences between themselves and parents as an impediment to children's learning. They may assume that they can adjust and effectively teach children regardless of whether their values differ from the children's parents. Teachers who have a rigid whole-class curriculum and do not adjust instruction and discipline to individual children may, in contrast, assume that children who do not experience similar discipline approaches and teaching at home will have difficulty adjusting to their curriculum and management strategies and thus perform less well. To test this hypothesis, we observed each participating child's classroom and rated teachers on the degree to which they had a flexible teaching style that adjusted to individual children's needs (referred to as a *student-centered* approach) versus a uniform approach dictated by a curriculum (referred to as *curriculum centered*). We predicted that curriculum-centered teachers' perceptions of value differences with parents would be more strongly linked to their perceptions of students' academic skills than would be true for student-centered teachers.

The notions of student-centered and curriculum-centered instruction are rooted in a debate about effective educational practices. The National Association for the Education of Young Children and many subject-matter experts embrace an educational approach that individualizes instruction to address differences in children's skill levels and understanding, in which children work individually and collaboratively to construct their own understanding (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997). Student-centered lessons involve conversations with students as well as some direct teaching (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, 1998; National Academy of Education, Commission on Reading, 1985; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1991; National Research Council, Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, 1998). In contrast, there are also proponents of highly teacher-directed instruction (e.g., Becker & Gersten, 1982; Carnine, Carnine, Karp, & Weisberg, 1988; Meyer, Gersten, & Gutkin, 1983). Some researchers claim that exploratory learning emphasizing autonomy and creativity is a luxury that poor children cannot afford and is incongruous with the teaching styles and goals of low-income families (Delpit, 1995). These more directive methods, which we refer to as curriculum centered, typically involve structured lessons—sometimes even scripted lessons—which are fully teacher led. Student work is usually in the form of workbooks that all students are asked to complete.

In summary, we investigated the extent to which a demographic marker (i.e., SES) and a measure of value discrepancies (i.e., teachers' perceived differences with parents regarding education-related values) related to teachers' ratings of children's academic competence. Further, we considered the potential moderating effects of the classroom teaching style on these relations. We have purposefully selected to study students from low-income families,

who are already at a disadvantage when they begin school, at a vulnerable transition point in terms of their school experience, the kindergarten year.

Method

Participants

Participants included 105 kindergarten students (53% girls) who were originally enrolled as infants in a longitudinal study of very low-income families. Data for the present investigation were collected in the spring of children's kindergarten year, when most children were 5 or 6 years old. All participating children were from low-income families in three different localities, an urban area in the northeast, a rural area in the northeast, and an urban area on the west coast. The average reported annual family income was between \$9,000 and \$12,000; 57.2% of mothers reported receiving food stamps. About half of the mothers were employed, 27.9% full time and 23.1% part time. Mothers varied in education level: 31.4% had less than a high school degree, 27.3% completed high school or its equivalent, and 41.3% had some training beyond high school (e.g., community college courses or specialized vocational courses). About one third of children (36.2%) lived with married parents, and most had at least one sibling (86.4%). Children were from a range of ethnic groups: African American (30%), Euro-American (33%), Latino (27%), and multiracial (10%).

The 105 children were distributed among 56 classrooms. All teachers were female, and most had a master's degree or some graduate school training (78%). They ranged in teaching experience from 1 to 38 years ($M = 22.8$ years). Teachers also varied in their ethnicity, although most were Euro-American (76% Euro-American, 9% African American, 7% Latino, and 8% Asian American). Most children were enrolled in schools that serve primarily a low-income population, as 80% of schools had more than half of enrolled students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Schools ranged in size from a low of 73 students to a high of 1,077 students, and most schools (66%) served grades kindergarten through sixth grade.

Procedure and Measures

Four sources of data were used for this investigation, all collected during a 3-month period in the spring of children's kindergarten year: (a) questionnaires were completed by teachers, (b) children's academic skills were assessed by an independent examiner, (c) demographic data were gathered from parents during interviews, and (d) observations were made of the kindergarten classrooms by trained field staff.

Teacher questionnaires. Teachers were either given or mailed questionnaires on participating children and asked to return them by mail. Most teachers (89%) had only 1 or 2 participating children in their classrooms. In addition to providing demographic information about themselves, teachers were asked to rate children's academic competencies in math and reading separately ("Please rate the child's reading-math-related skills"). They were asked to indicate their expectations of the child's future performance one year from that time ("How well do you expect the child to do next year in reading-math?"). A 5-point response scale was used for both questions (1 = *well below children this age*, 2 = *below children this age*, 3 = *about average*, 4 = *above children this age*, 5 = *well above children this age*). Teachers were also asked to predict children's performance in reading and math (separately) by the end of third grade ("Do you expect the child to be on grade level or above in reading-math by the end of third grade?"). A 4-point response scale was used (1 = *definitely no*, 2 = *probably no*, 3 = *probably yes*, 4 = *definitely yes*). Teachers' ratings of children's current competence and their expectations for children's first- and third-grade performance were so highly correlated ($r = .75$ and $r = .88$ for reading and $r = .78$ and $r = .93$ for math) that it did not seem reasonable to treat judgments of current competencies and expectations for future

performance as separate constructs. Thus, all three items were combined to create two composite measures of teacher perceptions of children's competency, one for literacy ($\alpha = .93$) and one for math ($\alpha = .94$).

On the basis of a review of the literature on teaching practices, teachers were also given a list of goals identified as potentially important for young children to develop in school. They were asked to rate the importance of each goal relative to the other goals on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*). A factor analysis revealed three scales reflecting: (a) traditional basic skills goals (e.g., work habits, factual knowledge, basic math and literacy skills; $M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.66$, $\alpha = .59$), (b) higher order thinking goals (e.g., critical thinking, independence and initiative, creativity; $M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.53$, $\alpha = .63$), and (c) social development goals (e.g., social skills, cooperation; $M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.63$, $\alpha = .51$).

In a separate section of the questionnaire, teachers were asked whether they considered their education-related values to be similar or different from those of the participating child's parent(s). A set of five questions asked teachers to rate congruence with a child's parent(s) with regard to discipline, parents' role in a child's education, and the teaching of math, literacy, and writing ("Are there differences between the parents' values or preferences and your values with respect to the educational program in the following areas: discipline, reading, writing, math, parents' role in assisting their child?"). A response scale of 3 points was used (1 = *no difference*, 2 = *some difference*, 3 = *great difference*). The Cronbach's alpha for this sample on this set of items was .92.

Assessment of children's skills. Children's skills were assessed independently by trained examiners. The examiners presented the material in English or Spanish, depending on the child's language preference. The math assessment measured children's counting abilities and familiarity with numbers (items from the Peabody Individual Achievement Test—Revised; Dunn & Dunn, 1981), their strategies for solving word problems (Carpenter, Ansell, Franke, & Fennema, 1993; Carpenter, Fennema, & Franke, 1996), and their skills in calculating (using a calculation subscale of the *Woodcock–Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery—Revised* [WJ–R]; Woodcock & Johnson, 1990). Four composite variables were created from the items in the math assessment: counting—early number tasks; problem-solving, pencil—paper calculations; and geometric items. The composite variables were standardized and averaged to create a total math skills score.

The literacy assessment measured children's abilities in reading (and prereading), writing, comprehension, and verbal fluency (Saunders, 1999; letter-word identification and passage comprehension subscales of the WJ–R; Woodcock & Johnson, 1990). Six composite variables were created: letter—sound identification, word reading, overall reading, writing, oral comprehension, and verbal fluency. The composite variables were standardized and averaged to create a single total literacy skill score.

Classroom observation measure. Trained observers used the Early Childhood Classroom Observation Measure (ECCOM) developed by Stipek and colleagues (Byler & Stipek, 2003; Stipek et al., 1998). Observations were conducted during the spring of the participating child's kindergarten year to document the teaching approach used in the classroom. Observers began their observations at the beginning of the school day and remained in the classroom for at least 3 hr, returning the following day if they had not observed a math and a literacy activity.

Two sets of 17 items in the ECCOM were used for this investigation to determine the classroom instructional environment. Observers gave a score of 1 (*low*) to 5 (*high*) indicating the extent to which the classroom looked like each descriptor and then wrote a justification for each score. One set of observation items was used to assess the degree to which teachers were student centered, and another set of items was used to assess how curriculum centered the teacher was. Teachers provided self-reports of their instructional goals regarding teaching of basic skills and higher order thinking processes.

The set of student-centered descriptors is aligned with the developmentally appropriate practice guidelines issued by the National Association for

the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Teachers receiving a high score on these items were respectful and responsive to children, encouraged children to communicate and elaborate on their thoughts, and celebrated each other's achievements, at whatever level they occurred. They applied rules consistently but not rigidly, and children had responsibility and opportunities for leadership roles and to solve problems on their own. The teacher individually monitored, assisted, and challenged children. They also solicited children's questions, ideas, solutions, or interpretations. Mathematics and literacy instruction balanced an emphasis on understanding and opportunities to practice, and children's learning was assessed regularly. Interrater reliability for the summary score on these items based on the 17 ratings, with two raters rating 18 classrooms, was .79.

The parallel set of 17 curriculum-centered items rated classrooms on how directive and rigid teachers were. The items described practices in which teachers enforced strict rules and gave children few opportunities to take responsibility or to choose activities; children were held accountable to rigid standards that were not adjusted to children's individual skill levels. Tasks were fully defined by the teacher or a published curriculum, and the teacher dominated and controlled discussion and conversation. Math and literacy instruction focused on discrete skills and heavy reliance on workbooks, with correctness emphasized. Additionally, there was relatively little attention given to developing social and communication skills, children did not have much time to work collaboratively, and activities were not adjusted to children's individual skills and interests. Interrater reliability on the summary score of a subset of 25 classrooms for this set of descriptors was .95.

Teachers who were high on one set of descriptors tended to be low on the other ($r = -.90$, $p < .001$). Therefore, we created a composite measure of classroom practices by standardizing and reverse scoring the items high on the curriculum-centered scale and adding them to those on the student-centered scale (standardized). The final scale had a potential range of -5.0 (indicating highly curriculum-centered practices) to 5.0 (indicating highly student-centered practices; the actual scores ranged from -2.78 to 3.21). Cronbach's alpha for the composite score was .94.

Results

Teacher competency ratings in math and reading did not differ by children's gender, race—ethnicity, or geographical location. Further, teachers' perceptions of value differences with parents did not differ by teachers' race—ethnicity, school geographic location, or children's race—ethnicity, although there was a trend toward greater value discrepancy between teachers and African American parents than between teachers and Latino or Euro-American parents, $F(2, 84) = 2.95$, $p < .06$. There were too few teachers of color to assess whether sharing or not sharing ethnicity with parents predicted teachers' value discrepancy judgments. Euro-American parents were more likely to have the same ethnicity as their child's teacher than were African American and Latino parents (because most of the teachers were Euro-American), but the proportion of African American parents whose ethnicity differed from their child's teacher's ethnicity (86%) was not greater than that of Latino parents (85%). Although ethnicity differences may have contributed to teachers' greater value discrepancy ratings for African American parents, if it were simply a matter of having different ethnic backgrounds, discrepancy scores should have been higher for Latino parents (who also often spoke a different language from teachers) than Euro-American parents.

Teachers rated 48% of children to be currently at grade level, 18% above grade level, and 34% below grade level in reading; for math they rated 51% of their students at grade level, 21% above

grade level, and 28% below grade level. They expected 74% of children to be at grade level or above grade level by third grade in reading and 78% of children to be at or above grade level by third grade in math skills. The higher proportion of children being rated below grade level than above grade level would be expected in a sample of very low-income children who entered school with below-average cognitive skills (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test [Dunn & Dunn, 1981] score average of 88.63, $SD = 16.30$, at 60 months).

As a check on the validity of the observation measure, we computed correlations between observers' ratings of teachers' practices and teachers' self-reported instructional goals. Teachers with observed student-centered practices reported placing relatively more emphasis on the development of children's higher order thinking strategies ($r = .30, p < .001$) and less emphasis on developing basic skills ($r = -.22, p < .01$). In comparison, teachers observed to use curriculum-centered practices reported less emphasis on higher order thinking strategies ($r = -.35, p < .001$) and more emphasis on teaching basic skills ($r = .38, p < .001$). Therefore, teachers' reported goals were consistent with their observed practices.

To test the main questions posed here, we used hierarchical regression analyses. Given the scatter of students across classrooms, we could not apply methods such as hierarchical linear modeling that take advantage of students nested in classrooms. On the basis of prior research, we expected children's actual skills to be related to teacher ratings of their competencies. Accordingly, the variable representing children's performance on the academic skills assessment was entered first. Our questions of interest related to the variables added after the academic skills' variable. We constructed a composite measure of maternal education and income (based on maternal report) as a proxy variable for SES. SES was entered next to determine whether teachers rated children's competencies differently on the basis of SES, controlling for children's actual level of skills. Third, the value-difference variable was entered to determine whether teachers' ratings varied by their perception of value differences with parents, after children's academic skills and SES were accounted for. Finally, we tested whether the type of classroom instruction practices predicted teachers' ratings of children's academic competence and whether such practices moderated associations found between perceived value differences and child competency ratings. Consistent with Baron and Kenny (1986), an interaction term was created as the product of the continuous variables, and a hierarchical, incremen-

tal F test was used to determine whether the interaction added significantly over and above the account predicted by the additive model, which included the other predictors. Bivariate correlations among study variables can be found in Table 1, and results of regression analyses are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

For teacher ratings of reading competence (presented in Table 2), children's independent literacy skill assessment added 13% of the variance and was significant. The second variable, SES, did not add significant variance. The value difference (VD) variable, added in Step 3, contributed a significant additional 17% of the variance. The negative direction on the coefficient ($-.57$) indicates that greater discrepancy in value differences predicted lower teacher ratings of children's academic competency. In Step 4, the classroom instructional practices (CP) variable was entered and did not add significantly to the equation. When in the final step, the interaction term ($VD \times CP$) was entered, the ΔR^2 was 4% and significant. That is, perceived value differences had distinct effects in different instructional settings.

Using the regression analysis findings reported in Table 2, we calculated the predicted values of teacher expectancy ratings for different classroom practices and found that perceived value differences had greater effects on teacher ratings of children's competencies in literacy in more curriculum-centered classrooms. Teachers with curriculum-oriented practices rated children of parents whom they perceived to have discrepant values to be more than one standard deviation (1.09 standard deviation) lower on literacy skills than children whose parents were perceived to have educational values congruent with the teacher's. Teachers with student-centered practices also rated children of parents with discrepant values to be less competent than other children in literacy skills but to a lesser extent, about two fifths of a standard deviation (0.39 standard deviation).

A similar pattern of results occurred in analyses of teacher ratings of children's math competencies (Table 3). Children's independently assessed math skills explained a significant 34% of the variance in teachers' ratings of children's math competencies. SES did not add significant variance. Perceived value differences added a unique 7% and were negatively related to teacher ratings of children's math competencies. The style of classroom instructional practices did not contribute additional variance. An interaction between value differences and classroom practices, however, added 6% and was significant, indicating that value differences were a better predictor of teacher ratings in one type of classroom. When the interaction effects were calculated, they indicated that

Table 1
Bivariate Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. SES	—						
2. Value differences	-.13	—					
3. Classroom practices	-.03	-.05	—				
4. Literacy skills	.22*	-.23*	.11	—			
5. Math skills	.21*	-.38***	.02	.55***	—		
6. Teacher ratings (literacy)	.17	-.48***	.01	.36***	.63***	—	
7. Teacher ratings (math)	.16	-.47***	.05	.27**	.59***	.93***	—

Note. $N = 105$. SES = socioeconomic status.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2
Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Teacher Ratings of Children's Competence in Literacy Skills

Step-predictor	β at final step ^a	R^2	ΔR^2
1. Child skills	.21**	.13	.13***
2. SES	.04	.14	.01
3. Value differences (VD)	-.57***	.31	.17***
4. Classroom practices (CP)	-.22*	.31	.00
5. VD \times CP	.14*	.34	.04*

Note. SES = socioeconomic status.

^a Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported because standardized coefficients are inappropriate with interaction terms (see Aiken & West, 1991, pp. 40–47).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

perceived teacher–parent value differences had greater effects on teacher ratings in more curriculum-centered classrooms. When value differences were high, teachers with curriculum-centered practices rated children as one standard deviation lower (0.97 standard deviation) in math skills than children whose parents held values similar to the teachers. Teachers with student-centered practices, however, rated both groups of children to be almost identical (0.04 standard deviation difference).

Discussion

This study produced several important findings. First, as predicted, teachers' ratings of children's academic competence and their expectations for children's future performance related highly to children's actual skills, assessed independently for this study. The relatively low level of children's actual skills found in the study is similar to that reported in other studies, which document that on average low-income children's academic skills lag behind their middle-class peers (Lee & Burkam, 2002). Even during the spring of the kindergarten year, only about one third of children (36.0%) knew the names of all letters in the alphabet and about one quarter (25.8%) did not know sound–symbol associations. In terms of math, only one half (50.0%) could count 30 objects correctly; one quarter of the sample (24.6%) could not count 20 objects correctly. Despite the relatively modest level of children's skills, teachers held generally positive beliefs about their academic competence; this positive evaluation by teachers has been noted in other studies of children living in low-income families (Wigfield et al., 1999).

Teachers varied in their judgments of children's competence, however. Although children's academic skills on our independent assessment predicted teachers' perceptions of children's academic competence, other factors also explained variance in teachers' judgments. When teachers believed the education-related values of parents differed from their own, they rated children as less competent academically and had lower expectations for their future academic success. The diminished ratings were evident even when children's actual academic skills and SES were controlled. Thus, value differences appeared to be a central feature in teacher judgments of these children's competencies. Alexander et al. (1987) suggested that social status differences between students and teachers produce teachers' negative perceptions of students. In fact, in this study, where students came from low-income families,

perceptions of value differences with parents seemed to be even more important indexes of social distance between students and teachers, than demographic markers, such as SES.

Although teachers' perceptions of value differences predicted their perceptions of children's academic competence in both math and literacy, the prediction was stronger for literacy. In the United States, teachers and parents place more emphasis on early reading skills than on math skills (Stevenson et al., 1990). We speculate that teachers view early literacy as an area of academic performance that is affected by the home environment (e.g., whether parents read to children), whereas they may know less about the relation between the home environment and children's emerging math skills. Therefore, literacy is an academic domain where teachers' perspectives of factors other than children's actual skills have greater influence on their ratings of children's competence.

The relation between perceived value differences and teacher judgments of children's reading and math competencies was greater in classrooms with certain styles of instruction. Teachers in classrooms that were teacher dominated and driven by curriculum were more likely to expect less of students from families with discrepant values than were teachers in classrooms in which the teacher was more responsive to individual differences in students. The children in student-centered classrooms were less likely to be disadvantaged by low expectations based on teachers' perceptions of parents' value differences—perceptions that may not be valid and may not be relevant to children's ability to succeed in school. We demonstrated the importance of investigating both teachers' beliefs and values and the educational contexts in which they are enacted.

Delpit (1995) has argued for the benefits of value matches between teachers and parents, especially for children of color. Given the increasing diversity of the U.S. population and the demographics of the population of teachers, value matches are increasingly less likely to occur, however. Many classrooms include children from a range of diverse cultural backgrounds, making it difficult for teachers to “match” their approach to the cultural backgrounds of all students. Children of color and students for whom English is not their first language comprise the majority in many schools, especially in urban communities. Thirty-eight percent of public school students were considered to be members of minority groups in 1999 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). In contrast, 90% of

Table 3
Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Teacher Ratings of Children's Competence in Math Skills

Step-predictor	β at final step ^a	R^2	ΔR^2
1. Child skills	.39***	.34	.34***
2. SES	.02	.35	.01
3. Value differences (VD)	-.34**	.42	.07**
4. Classroom practices (CP)	-.24**	.42	.01
5. VD \times CP	.17***	.48	.06**

Note. SES = socioeconomic status.

^a Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported because standardized coefficients are inappropriate with interaction terms (see Aiken & West, 1991, pp. 40–47).

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

teachers who work with these children are Euro-American (National Education Association, 1997). These statistics underscore the need for teachers to adapt their teaching to meet diverse children's needs rather than lower their expectations for students whose parents have different values or practices from their own. To this end, teacher preparation and professional development programs can play an essential role in helping teachers learn to bridge cultural differences between themselves and their students' families.

This study has several limitations. We did not assess parents' views of their value differences with teachers, and parents may have distinct views on value differences. Also, the findings are, by design, limited to children in low-income families, and given the truncated range of SES in this study, the lack of differences by SES should be considered with caution. Further, we do not know the extent to which teacher-parent value differences exist and are important in a wider range of families.

Despite these limitations, this investigation adds an important dimension to the literature on teachers' judgments of the competence and future academic success of low-income children during the kindergarten year. In previous studies of teacher expectations, researchers focused on the effect of student characteristics and behavior. The findings of this study are particularly remarkable in that they demonstrate that factors that are not directly observed in children themselves may affect teachers' judgments and potentially their behavior and in turn children's learning. These findings thus add a new dimension to the literature on teacher expectancy and suggest one mechanism by which some children from low-income families enter a path of diminished expectations.

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New Editor Appointed for *Contemporary Psychology: APA Review of Books*, 2005–2010

The Publications and Communications Board of the American Psychological Association announces the appointment of Danny Wedding (Missouri Institute of Mental Health) as editor of *Contemporary Psychology: APA Review of Books*, for a 6-year term beginning in 2005. The current editor, Robert J. Sternberg (Yale University), will continue as editor through 2004.

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