

Multicultural Issues

Correspondence Between Parents and Teachers on Cultural Values and Preschool Readiness Goals: A Study of Mexican-Origin Head Start Parents and Teachers

Angela R. Taylor, Allison R. Ewing, and Sridevi S. Ramakumar

PRESENTER: Angela R. Taylor

It has been argued that Latino children may be at a disadvantage in their early school adjustment due to disparities between the cultural values and goals of Latino families and those emphasized in U.S. schools (e.g., Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). The purpose of the present study was to compare the cultural values and goals of Mexican-origin parents and their children's Head Start teachers of the same ethnicity. The impact of parent-teacher value discrepancies on children's preschool outcomes was also examined.

Participants for the study consisted of 126 Mexican-origin mothers ($n=75$, mean age = 30 years, 85% Spanish speaking, 83% born in Mexico) and fathers ($n=51$, mean age = 34 years, 80% Spanish-speaking, 82% born in Mexico) with a child enrolled in the center-based Head Start program in a southwestern city. Thirty-five teachers (100% Hispanic, mean age = 39 years) from the children's Head Start classrooms also participated.

A rating scale adapted from the Relational Family Values Q-Sort (Wozniak et al., 1996) was used to assess parents' and teachers' endorsement of the values of familism (family loyalty and interdependence), respeto (obedience and respect for authority), and individualism (independence and autonomy). In an open-ended interview on parents' socialization goals, mothers and fathers responded to the question "What qualities do you think your child will need to possess in order to do well in preschool?" Teachers responded to a similar question (i.e., "What qualities do you believe a child needs to possess in order to do well in preschool?") on a written questionnaire. Data on children's language/literacy and early math competency were obtained from Head Start records.

Results of content analysis and paired t-tests revealed that parents and teachers differed considerably in their views of the readiness skills needed for preschool success. Parents emphasized intellectual/study skills, self-regulation (attention skills, self-control), and proper behavior (respect, obedience) more than did teachers; whereas teachers placed more emphasis on the child's personal resources (e.g., self-esteem, positive mood) and having a supportive family/school environment. As compared to mothers, teachers also placed greater emphasis on the child's motivational orientation to the classroom (e.g., participation, goal-directedness). Interestingly, both parents and teachers recognized the importance of social skills for children's early school success.

Paired t-tests comparing parent and teacher cultural values revealed that mothers ($M=1.89$, $SD=.42$) and fathers ($M=1.85$, $SD=.34$) placed a significantly higher value on respeto than did teachers ($M=1.55$, $SD=.37$), whereas teachers ($M=2.20$, $SD=.27$) more strongly endorsed

individualism than did mothers ($M=1.87$, $SD=.39$) or fathers ($M=1.83$, $SD=.35$). Although parents and teachers tended to agree on the value of familism, hierarchical multiple regression analyses showed that mother-teacher disagreement on this value (assessed in the fall) was predictive of children's lower end-of-year language/literacy ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .05$) and early math ($\beta = -.29$, $p < .05$) scores.

The present findings provide evidence for both continuity and discontinuity with respect to parent and teacher cultural values and goals for children's preschool readiness. These findings also support the idea that home-school discontinuities on cultural values can undermine children's adjustment to early schooling.

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“You see things with different eyes”: Parents’ long term perceptions of the Head Start experience

Margaret Caspe, Ronit Kahana-Kalman, Andrew Seltzer

PRESENTERS: Margaret Caspe, Marlene Gilman

Strong linkages among early childhood programs, elementary schools and families help young children and their families transition smoothly to formal schooling (Early, Pianta, Taylor & Cox, 2001). A Community Schools approach strengthens these important connections by integrating quality early childhood programming into a larger system of school instruction and family support (Dryfoos, Quinn & Barkin, 2005). The purpose of this retrospective investigation was to examine immigrant Latino parents’ recollections of the Community School Head Start experience after their children graduated and to understand how these families were currently involved in their children’s education.

As part of a larger action research project, 73 former Head Start parents completed a survey. Eighty-five percent of the parents currently had children enrolled in grades K-5 in the Community School in which the Head Start program was located. Nearly 89% of the families were Latino in origin with most born in either the Dominican Republic or Mexico. Parents were recruited by word of mouth through family, school and community key informants.

Parents responded to 13 yes/no questions about activities they remembered participating in during Head Start (e.g., parent teacher conferences, workshops). Families then completed questions about their current involvement in children’s learning at home and school using a Spanish language adaptation of the Home and School Involvement subscales of the Parent-Teacher Involvement Questionnaire (PTIQ; Kohl, et al., 2000). Parents also reported about their social networks by recounting how many parents they knew well enough to talk about their child’s classroom during Head Start and at present. Last, they provided their perceptions of change in their parenting ability using retrospective pretest methodology (Pratt, McGuigan & Katzev, 2000).

In retrospect, the majority of parents reported high levels of involvement in activities in Head Start. The number of Head Start activities parents recalled participating in was positively and significantly correlated with parents’ participation in their children’s learning during elementary school ($r=.29$; $p=.017$).

In addition, the number of social contacts a parent made during Head Start was strongly correlated with the number of social contacts he or she kept connected with at the time of the survey ($r=.68$; $p<.001$). This suggests relationships formed during Head Start persist over time. Moreover, social contacts are positively associated with involvement in children’s education at both home and school ($r=.39$, $p=.001$).

Finally, parents believed Head Start made a significant impact on their parenting skills. For example, parents were asked about their ability to help their children learn before and after Head

Start. On a scale of 1-6, before Head Start parents rated themselves on average 3.36 (SD=1.62) and after Head Start 5.39 (SD = .906); $t(69) = -10.629$ ($p < .001$).

Although this study cannot establish the unique affect of Head Start on parents' current involvement practices, this investigation suggests a process whereby participation in Head Start activities located in the context of a Community School is positively related to Latino parents' involvement in their children's learning in the later elementary school years.

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Mothers' Acculturation: Does it Influence Mexican American Head Start Students' Academic Readiness for Kindergarten?

Francisco Palermo, Phillip T. Briggs, Laura D. Hanish, Carol Lynn Martin, and Richard A. Fabes

PRESENTERS: Francisco Palermo, Phillip Thomas Briggs

The Hispanic population is the largest and fastest growing minority in the U.S. (Kent et al., 2001; Vélez & Saenz, 2001), comprising the largest population of high school dropouts (39%; NCES, 2001). Thus, it is critical to identify the factors that are associated with Hispanics' school adjustment. Because preschool is the first time that many children are exposed to structured learning environments and because research has shown that early school-related difficulties predict later school dropout (e.g., Alexander et al., 2001), it is important to identify the factors that are associated with Hispanics' early school success.

Among Mexican American adolescents, acculturation (i.e., the process of adapting to a new culture) is associated with greater academic achievement and lower dropout rates (López et al., 2002). Less is known about how cultural orientation influences preschoolers' school success; however, it is likely that families' cultural orientations impact children's early school-related experiences. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine how mothers' cultural orientations were related to Mexican American Head Start preschoolers' academic readiness for kindergarten. Because researchers (e.g., Cuéllar et al., 1995) have argued that acculturation is a multidimensional construct that includes one's own culture of origin, we examined the role of mothers' Anglo and Mexican orientations. Preschoolers whose mothers were more bicultural were expected to fare better academically than children whose mothers were less acculturated. Participants were 89 Mexican American preschoolers and their mothers from 11 Head Start classrooms in the southwest. Measures included the parent-rated Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II; Cuéllar et al., 1995); the Word Identification and Applied problems subscales of the Woodcock-Johnson Achievement-III (WJ-III; Woodcock et al., 2000) or the Bateria-III (Muñoz-Sandoval, et al., 2005); and a teacher-rated academic competence measure that tapped preschoolers' logical thinking, mathematical, reading, and writing capabilities (Fabes et al., 2003).

To classify mothers on their Anglo and Mexican orientations, we conducted a k-means clustering analysis. A two cluster solution best characterized the data. The first cluster (Enculturated) consisted of 65 mothers who were high on Mexican orientation and low on Anglo orientation. The second cluster (Bicultural) consisted of 24 mothers high on both Anglo and Mexican orientations. After controlling for several background factors, cluster membership had a significant main effect on teachers' ratings of preschoolers' academic readiness but not preschoolers WJ-III/Bateria-III performance. Specifically, preschoolers whose mothers were in the bicultural cluster scored significantly higher on teachers' ratings of academic readiness than children whose mothers were in the enculturated cluster.

The inconsistency in findings across teachers' ratings and children's performance on a standardized assessment may be due to teacher bias. That is, children from bicultural families

may be more proficient in English and it may be easier for their parents to be more engaged with teachers and involved in their child's school experience. Teachers may interpret this as indicative of children's enhanced academic skills or readiness for kindergarten, regardless of children's actual academic knowledge. These findings highlight the value of being sensitive to Head Start students' cultural orientations.

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Daily Routines of Infants From Ethnically Diverse and Immigrant Families

Christina Eggermont, Erika Niwa, Dr. Ronit Kahana-Kalman, Catherine Tamis-LeMonda

PRESENTERS: Christina Eggermont, Erika Niwa

Everyday activities, such as feeding, bathing, play and sleep, represent infants' introduction into the cultural norms and practices of their communities and families. Yet, virtually nothing is known about the daily routines of young infants from diverse ethnic groups in the U.S., and the roles of different family members (e.g., fathers, grandparents, siblings) in these activities. It is estimated that by 2040, 1 in 3 Americans will be foreign-born. How is culture expressed in the daily routines of infants' lives? What are the everyday experiences of 1-month-old infants and how do these change across early development? Which routines are shared across ethnic groups and which are unique to different groups? Continued analyses will examine how the role of gender, family structure and size, socioeconomic and mothers' work status affect the everyday experiences of young infants. These questions are fundamental to understanding family life in the rapidly changing demographics of the U.S. Inspired by the time use surveys included in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (Hofferth and Sandberg, 2001), this study sought to document the earliest experiences of infants from immigrant and native born, ethnically diverse populations. To date, the use of time diaries has been limited to families with older children and adolescents. This study represents the first attempt to bridge the methodological challenges of utilizing time diaries with immigrant families of young infants. The data presented focus on daily routines reported by mothers from when their infants were 1 months of age.

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Cross-Culture Variations in Developmental Goals: A Study of African American, Chinese, Dominican, and Mexican Mothers

Amanda R. Flores-Schrey, Odessa Despot, Catherine S. Tamis-LeMonda

PRESENTERS: Amanda R. Flores Schrey, Odessa Despot

In recent years there has been heightened attention surrounding parents' goals for their children's development, in terms of the values or qualities parents wish to instill in their young children. Culture, socioeconomic status and living conditions are factors that have been shown to influence parents' goals for their children (Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995; Harkness & Super, 1996; Wang & Tamis-LeMonda, 2003; Coard et. al, 2004). Yet, little is known about the ways that these forces shape parenting views in heterogeneous communities. Moreover, few investigations have explored parents' goals in early infancy, when parents are adjusting to and re-negotiating their roles in family life.

To address these limitations, this study examined mothers' goals when their infants were only 1 month of age. As part of a longitudinal, birth cohort study, 380 low-income mothers of four ethnicities (56 Chinese, 97 Mexicans, 114 Dominican and 113 African American) were recruited at three NYC hospitals hours after the birth of their infants. Mothers were at least 18 years of age at the time of the baseline interview and gave written consent to both phone interviews and home visits. In follow-up phone calls one month after the birth of their child, mothers were asked to name three desired and three undesired child qualities that they wished their children to have by three years of age.

Our findings revealed interesting group similarities and differences. In terms of the top three qualities, Chinese mothers mentioned *Obedience*, *Happiness* and *Well Mannered*; African-American mothers mentioned *Well Mannered*, *Self Control* and *Sociable*; Dominican mothers mentioned *Self Control*, *Well Mannered* and being *Obedient* and Mexican mothers mentioned *Self-Control*, *Health* and *Obedience* as qualities they wished to see in their children at three years of age.

In terms of qualities that differed across the groups, Chinese mothers mentioned *Acclaim* (i.e. qualities associated with fame and beauty) and *Intelligence*, substantially more than any of the other three groups. In comparison, African American mothers more often mentioned *Leadership*, *Learning Literacy*, and *Respect* while *Health* and *Self-Control* were mentioned more frequently by Mexican mothers than any other group. Finally, compared to the other mothers in our sample, Dominicans mentioned *Spoiled* more often as a quality they did not wish to see in their children at three years of age.

Our analysis also showed that mothers' education related to goals in interesting ways. For example, higher education was associated with a greater emphasis on *Independence*, whereas infant gender, birth order and father residency were generally unrelated to developmental goals. This study advances the literature on parents' developmental goals by revealing telling ethnic differences that are already present at one month after the birth of children. At the same time, our findings indicate that Mexican, Dominican, Chinese and African-American mothers share similar

developmental goals at this early period in parenting. These findings align with the notion that parents' cultural belief systems "are at once individually constructed *and* culturally shared" (Harkness and Super, 1996).

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How Does Parent Involvement Translate? A Study on Parent Involvement in Bilingual Families at Head Start

Manica F. Ramos, Julia L. Mendez

PRESENTERS: Manica Ramos, Julia L. Mendez

Literature Review

Observers have speculated that by the year 2035, some areas will have kindergarten populations that are 50% bilingual (Garcia, McLaughlin, Spodek, & Saracho, 1995). Such growth in linguistic diversity of the society requires a change in structure of social and educational contexts so that support systems for bilingualism in children are initiated.

Shifts in circumstances of early care giving have raised questions about children's development, especially in language proficiency (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000).

A lack of concentration on bilingualism in early-childhood educational research may be due to many factors such as our unofficially monolingual society or reactions from earlier outdated research suggesting that learning a second language may indicate loss of the first (Wong, 1991).

Parent involvement is key for Head Start program's base of promoting children's early learning via parent-child relationships (Downer & Mendez, 2005). Focus on parent involvement is due to findings of positive affects on school readiness when parents are involved in school activities (Marcon, 1999).

This poster begins to examine parent involvement of bilingual families. This project seeks to answer the following questions: Can communication levels help inform desired and actual involvement for bilingual parents of young children? Do communication barriers impact desired and actual parental involvement for bilingual families?

Method

Participants. Parents were recruited from Head Start centers located in a culturally diverse area of southern New Jersey. Twelve families were interviewed for the initial study. Interviews were completed in either English or Spanish.

Measures. The About Being a Parent Scale (ABPS) (Wentzel, 1993) assesses parents' sense of efficacy regarding their involvement in promoting their child's education.

Parent involvement in their child's early education was assessed using the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). This measure consists of three empirically derived scales: School-Based Involvement, Home-Based Involvement, Home-School Conferencing.

The Communication questionnaire (COMMQ) developed by Mendez and Ramos assess parents' communication abilities (written or verbal) and comfort within the Head Start setting.

Procedure. Selection criterion for parents to participate was that they answer “yes” to “Is any language other than English spoken in your home?” Respondents were interviewed via phone or in-person. Each interview of the ABPS, FIQ and the COMMQ approximated 15 minutes.

Results.

Preliminary results are available for the initial sample of bilingual families. Findings reveal differences in the amount of support bilingual parents need in order to communicate with Head Start (Rarely- 58.33%, Sometimes-8.33%, Often-8.33%, and Always-25.00%). Also, families differ regarding their comfort level of asking Head Start staff for help to communicate (Rarely- 25.00%, Sometimes-25.00%, Often-25.00%, Always-25.00%).

Discussion.

Parent involvement has already been identified as an important component in success of children in early education. This study suggests bilingualism be viewed as a separate contextual facet, as would SES or race, so that appropriate measures to accommodate this population’s language needs be employed. The area of parent involvement for bilingual families’ early educational settings is lacking substantial research. Further analysis with the FIQ, ABPS and COMMQ may reveal that differences in parent involvement are correlated with communication levels.

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The Interface of Chinese and American Cultures: Teacher Roles and Goals in an Urban Head Start Center

Clement Chau, Serena Fan, Becky New, Susan Kirst, and Iris Chin Ponte

PRESENTERS: Clement Chau, Serena Fan, Rebecca S. New, Susan Kirst, Iris Chin Ponte

There is growing recognition of the need for greater understanding of the challenges and potentials for children from immigrant families in America's public schools (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Little is known about the processes of acculturation for preschool-age immigrant children, who are dependent upon adults to negotiate their entry into American society. Research has established the relationship between cultural values and parental belief systems (Harkness & Super, 1996; New, 1998) as well as the cultural nature of early schooling (Tobin, Wu, Davidson, 1987). It is therefore not surprising that immigrant parents and teachers of their children have difficulties developing successful cooperative relationships, given disparities in their experiences and cultural and linguistic differences (Edwards, 1999). What is less understood is what happens when teachers share similar immigrant status and cultural values with the parents of children they teach.

This presentation draws upon data from a pilot study on Chinese immigrant parents' and teachers' interpretations of school readiness and home-school relationships. Participants included parents and teachers from a Head Start program serving 85 families, most of Chinese origin, of three- and four-year old children from an urban setting in northeast United States. The teachers are native Chinese; their language of instruction is a combination of Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. For this presentation, we consider the interface between demands of acculturation and pride in cultural heritage as reflected in teachers' [n=11] goals and beliefs about their roles in children's school readiness.

A qualitative analysis of semi-structured teacher interviews suggests that immigrant teachers actively negotiate their newly-acquired understandings of developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) as they correspond to and are supported by traditional Chinese values and orientations to early learning.

Teachers were unanimous in their belief in the importance for children to know and understand their native cultures within an American setting. Many cited the importance of children being familiar with traditional Chinese holidays as well as describing what it takes to maintain Chinese culture within the context of the American society.

Teachers understood that their primary role was to prepare children for subsequent school achievement in the U.S.; and expressed their belief in the importance of learning English and adapting to Western lifestyle for children's future success. Teachers also stressed the Chinese value of learning how to 'follow rules and listen' even as they emphasized independence and autonomy, creativity and verbal expression.

Teachers expressed a sense of responsibility to families, citing challenges faced by immigrant parents, including limited understanding of Western norms and beliefs about early learning. They

described Head Start's provision of educational and emotional support to parents so that children's experiences at home would compliment those at school; and cited their own roles in mediating parents' and children's assimilation into American society.

Results from this study underscore the importance of addressing cultural issues in Head Start policies and practices, including professional development activities that address cultural interpretations of developmental appropriateness (Mallory & New, 1994) and enhance teachers' contributions to the successful integration of immigrant children and families in the U.S.

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The Role of Early Childhood Experience in the Transition of Immigrant and Refugee Children from Home to School: Best Practices and Policies for Easing the Transition and Laying a Foundation for Future Success

Judith A. Colbert

PRESENTER: Judith A. Colbert

Transitions pose special challenges for young immigrant and refugee children. This project will identify specific characteristics of early childhood program quality that challenge newcomers and reformulate those characteristics as “best practices” for school readiness in newcomer children. Readiness for school was selected as a measurable proxy for successful transitions because it is a research-based concept that can provide insight into the characteristics of successful transitions and because of its importance to future outcomes for children. The project is being carried out in conjunction with a federally funded early childhood initiative, operating across Canada since 1993 for young immigrant and refugee children whose parents are participating in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program.

A literature search suggests that the LINC initiative may have many unique characteristics. Early childhood programming specifically for newcomers is rare (Eurydice, 2004), although newcomer children make up an increasingly large proportion of the population of western countries and are at high risk for school failure and negative outcomes (Duffy, 2003; Takanishi, 2004; Pelletier & Corter, 2005), and selected research attests to the value of early education for newcomer children as a foundation for later school success (Speiss et al., 2003; Lanfranchi, 2004).

School readiness and factors affecting the transition to school in mainstream populations have received wide attention (NEGP, 1995; Dockett & Perry, 2001). Only a few studies (Pelletier & Corter, 2005; Dockett & Perry, 2005) explore the additional complexities of readiness associated with the newcomer experience, although the urgency of recognizing and addressing specific newcomer issues is a growing theme (Takanishi (2004).

Within this context, this project focuses on practices. Program characteristics typically associated with high quality (NAEYC, 2005) were explored to determine how their implementation might challenge newcomers. Characteristics associated with readiness with the greatest potential to raise concerns were summarized as key challenges that were analyzed to identify specific barriers. Strategies for overcoming these barriers were expressed as best practices appropriate for any setting where newcomer children are served. After further refinement, these best practices will be implemented in LINC programs and, in the second part of this project, their effectiveness will be assessed by tracking the progress of LINC program children in elementary school.

This project followed a feasibility study in the summer and fall of 2004 involving regular observations at a LINC program site and interviews with children, parents, staff, and administrators. Results point to beneficial increases in language and social skills. Program children appeared to be making more successful transitions and having more success in school than siblings who had not participated.

This project will lead to the broad dissemination of best practices for newcomer children and, more specifically, to enhancements to LINC childminding programs to strengthen their role as supports for immigrant and refugee children and families in the transition from home to school. Policy implications include program expansion to include all newcomer children, enhanced two-generational programming and supports for first and second language learning, and increased liaison with elementary schools.

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Childrearing beliefs and practices during preschool: An investigation of home-school congruence

Erica Odom, Darlene Head-Reeves, Jason Downer, Oscar Barbarin

PRESENTERS: Jason T. Downer, Darlene Michelle Head-Reeves, Erica Odom, Oscar A. Barbarin

Successful transition to school is predicated on achieving continuity between the dynamic entities of families, classrooms, and schools (Kagan & Newman, 1998). However, achieving this continuity becomes more complex when one considers the diverse cultural beliefs, values, and expectations of different groups who come together during preschool and the transition to elementary school (Bowman, 1994, 2002; Johnson et al., 2003). Some have argued that children who begin school with similar cultural values and expectations for behaviors and interactions and who have culturally-based knowledge and skills that are valued by teachers are more likely to make a smooth transition than children who come from cultural minority backgrounds (Rogoff, 2003). Therefore, in an era of increasing economic and ethnic diversity, continuity in beliefs, values, and practices as children navigate familial and school settings is a salient factor in supporting young children's success in the early years of school.

The dimensions along which families and schools may converge in ways that contribute to or, perhaps, undermine children's development are numerous. The focus of this study was to investigate the compatibility of parent and teacher childrearing beliefs and practices for a culturally diverse, economically disadvantaged sample of preschool children. First, we examined how beliefs and socialization practices that a child encounters at home match with those encountered in preschool (defined as home-school congruence) and whether this differs as a function of a child's ethnicity. Second, we examined the extent to which home-school congruence may predict children's socio-emotional and academic competence at the beginning of kindergarten.

Home-school congruence was calculated by creating absolute difference scores, using self-report measures of childrearing beliefs and observed socialization practices (during adult-child interactions) for parents and preschool teachers. This resulted in congruence scores for authoritarian beliefs and observed supportiveness and control. In preliminary analyses, three ANCOVAs were used to examine whether congruence was different across ethnic groups. In each model, maternal education was a covariate, race was the IV (European American, African American, Latino), and an absolute difference score was the DV. Results suggest that there is an association between home-school congruence and child ethnicity, but only for certain socialization practices and beliefs. Specifically, African American children experienced less congruence between home and school in the areas of observed control practices and reported authoritarian beliefs, compared to European American children (no differences for Latino children). In a set of regression analyses controlling for maternal education, the home-school congruence variables were separately examined as predictors of children's academic and socio-emotional competence at entry into kindergarten (receptive and expressive language, literacy, math, social competence, and problem behaviors). Home-school congruence of observed control practices was a significant predictor of receptive and expressive language, and math skills, whereas congruence of childrearing beliefs was only predictive of receptive language.

Specifically, children experiencing more congruent home and preschool environments in terms of control practices and authoritarian beliefs tended to have better developed language and math skills upon kindergarten entry. Home-school congruence of observed supportiveness, however, was not a significant predictor of any kindergarten outcomes.

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