Inequities in Access to Quality Early Care and Education: Associations with Funding and Community Context

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**Background**

- Child care quality matters to children’s social and cognitive outcomes, especially among those most at risk. (Heckman, 2010; Cunha & Heckman, 2006)

- Parents must navigate a child care market that “does not produce uniformly good care.” (Helburn & Bergmann, 2002)
North Carolina Child Care Context

- QRIS started in 1999
- All licensed early care and education programs are **required** to participate in the 5-star rating system, at least at the 1-star level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Points Earned</th>
<th>Number of Stars Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00 - 3.99</td>
<td>★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00 - 6.99</td>
<td>★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.00 - 9.99</td>
<td>★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.00 - 12.99</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.00 - 15.99</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
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Purpose

To examine program- and community-level characteristics related to total points earned by early care and education programs in North Carolina's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)
Research Questions

• To what extent does child care quality vary across community contexts?

• What is the relationship between
  • Socioeconomic context of communities and child care quality?
  • Program funding and child care quality?
  • Funding and community level interactions and child care quality?

• Examined these questions separately for child care centers and family child care homes
Sample

- Nearly all licensed child care in NC in 2008
- 6,882 programs within 619 zipcodes
  - 54% family child care homes
  - 46% child care centers

Dependent Variable
Program Characteristics

- Concentration of state and federal funding
  - More at Four*
  - Head Start*
  - DCD Subsidy

*Child Care Centers only
Community Characteristics
Decennial Census 2000 Summary File 3

Concentrated Disadvantage
• % below poverty
• % receiving public assistance
• % unemployed
• % female headed family with children
• % Black or African American

Residential Stability
• % living in the same house for 5 years or more
• % owner occupied homes

Concentrated Affluence
• % of families with incomes 75K or higher
• % of population with at least a bachelors degree
• % employed in a professional or managerial occupation

Concentrated Immigration
• % Latino or Hispanic
• % Foreign Born

(Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999)
Research Question

• To what extent does child care center quality vary across community contexts?

• What is the relationship between
  • Socioeconomic context of communities and child care quality?
  • Program funding and child care quality?
  • Funding and community level interactions and child care quality?
Main Effects for Child Care Centers

- Higher
  - Concentrated Disadvantage
  - Residential Stability

- Higher
  - DCD, Head Start & More at Four Funds
  - Concentrated Affluence
Child Care Center Total Points by Head Start Funding and Community Affluence

(-1 SD) Concentrated Affluence
Mean Community Affluence
(+1 SD) Concentrated Affluence
Child Care Center Total Points by DCD Subsidy Funding and Community Affluence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(-1SD) Concentrated Affluence</th>
<th>Mean Community Affluence</th>
<th>(+1SD) Concentrated Affluence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(-1 SD) DCD funding</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean DCD funding</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(+1 SD) DCD funding</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question

• To what extent does family child care home quality vary across community contexts?

• What is the relationship between
  • Socioeconomic context of communities and child care quality?
  • Program funding and child care quality?
  • Funding and community level interactions and child care quality?
Main Effects for Family Child Care Homes

- Higher Residential Stability
- Higher DCD Funds
- Higher Concentrated Affluence
Family Child Care Homes Total Points by DCD Subsidy Funding and Community Disadvantage

- (-1 SD) DCD funding
- Mean DCD funding
- (+1 SD) DCD funding

(-1 SD) Concentrated Disadvantage
Mean Community Disadvantage
(+1 SD) Concentrated Disadvantage
Summary

• We must ensure access is not restricted based on socioeconomic characteristics of a community
• Funding is distributed such that all programs have an equal opportunity to reach the highest standards of the TQRIS.

So that the ratings from the TQRIS can live up to the intended goal — that *all* children in early care and education have experiences that promote their optimal development.
Preview: What predicts participation in ERS assessment (to obtain a higher star rating)

- Environmental Rating Scale Assessment is part of the Program Standards points
- Necessary to earn 4 or 5 stars.

Lower, Hatfield, Cassidy, Faldowski, & Hartman (in preparation)
Child Care Centers are more likely to participate in the ERS assessment...

Program Level
• Higher capacity
• More at Four funding
• Head Start funding
• *DCD subsidy funding

Community Level
• Lower residential stability
• Lower concentrated disadvantage
• Higher concentrated affluence [38 times more likely to participate!!!]
Family Child Care Homes are more likely to participate in the ERS assessment...

Program Level
- Higher capacity (more than 5 children)
- Extended care
- DCD subsidy funding

Community Level
- Lower residential stability
- Higher concentrated affluence [11 times more likely to participate]
Acknowledgement

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Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the United States Department of Health and Human Services.


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