

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.

Total Points Earned	Number of Stars Received
1.00 - 3.99	★
4.00 - 6.99	★★
7.00 - 9.99	★★★
10.00 - 12.99	★★★★
13.00 - 15.99	★★★★★



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)



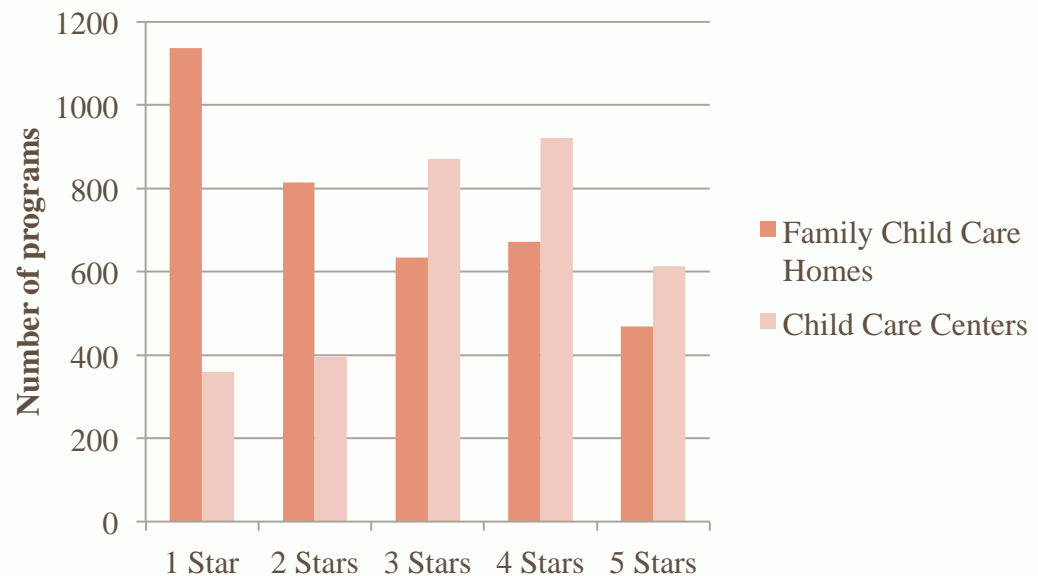
Research Questions

- 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

Concentrated Immigration

- % Latino or Hispanic
- % Foreign Born

Residential Stability

- % living in the same house for 5 years or more
- % owner occupied homes

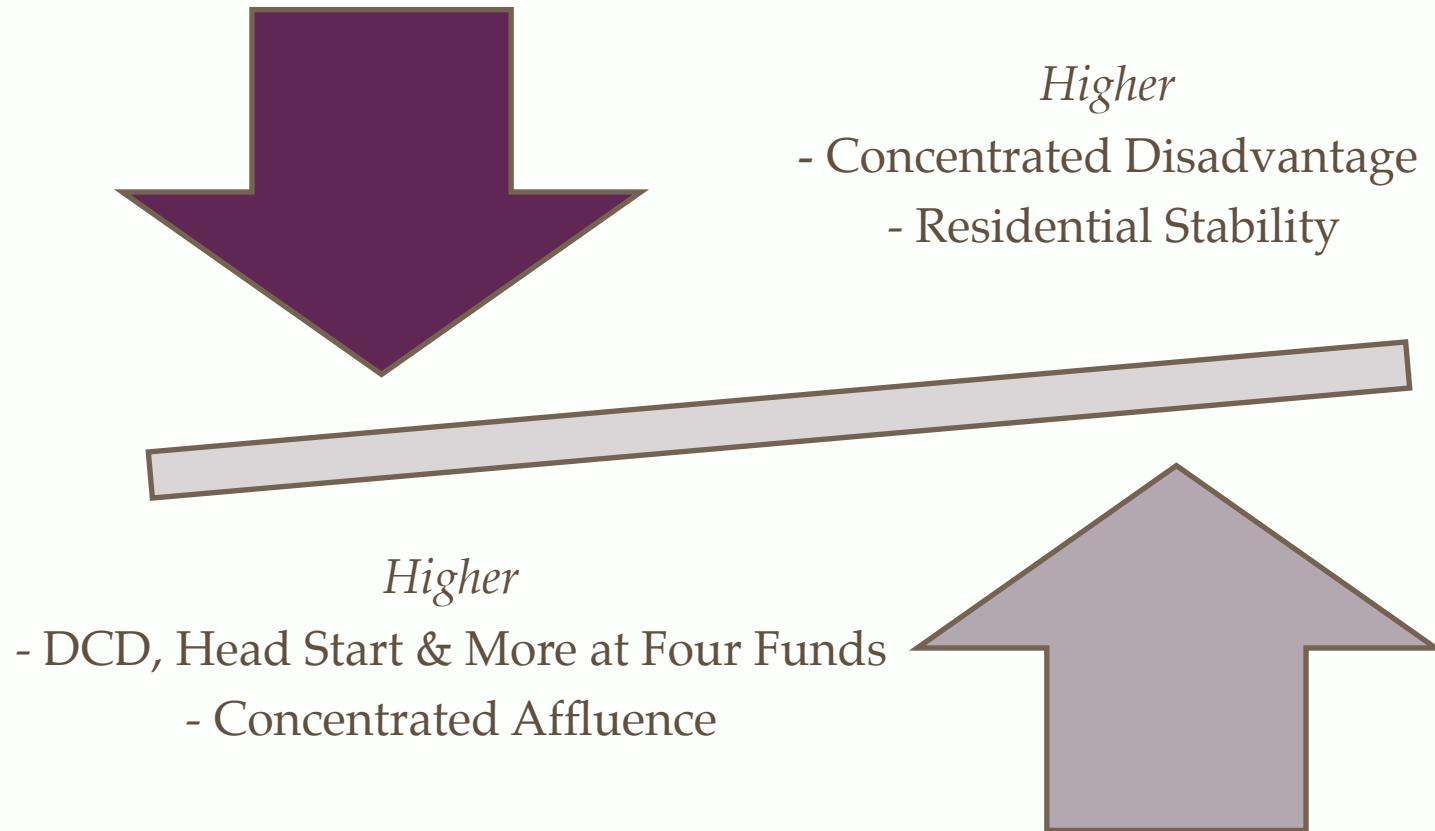
Concentrated Affluence

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

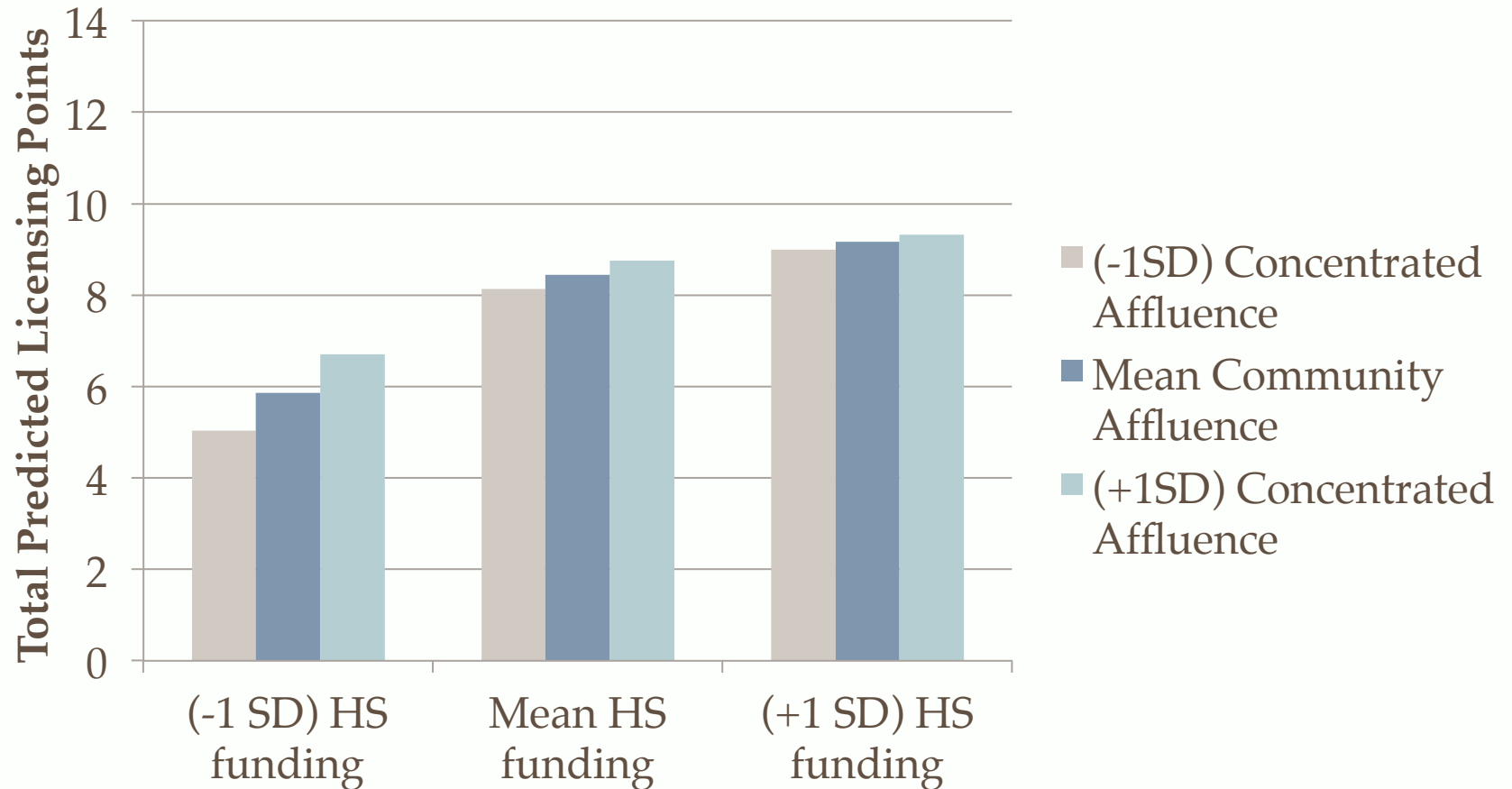
Research Question

- 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?

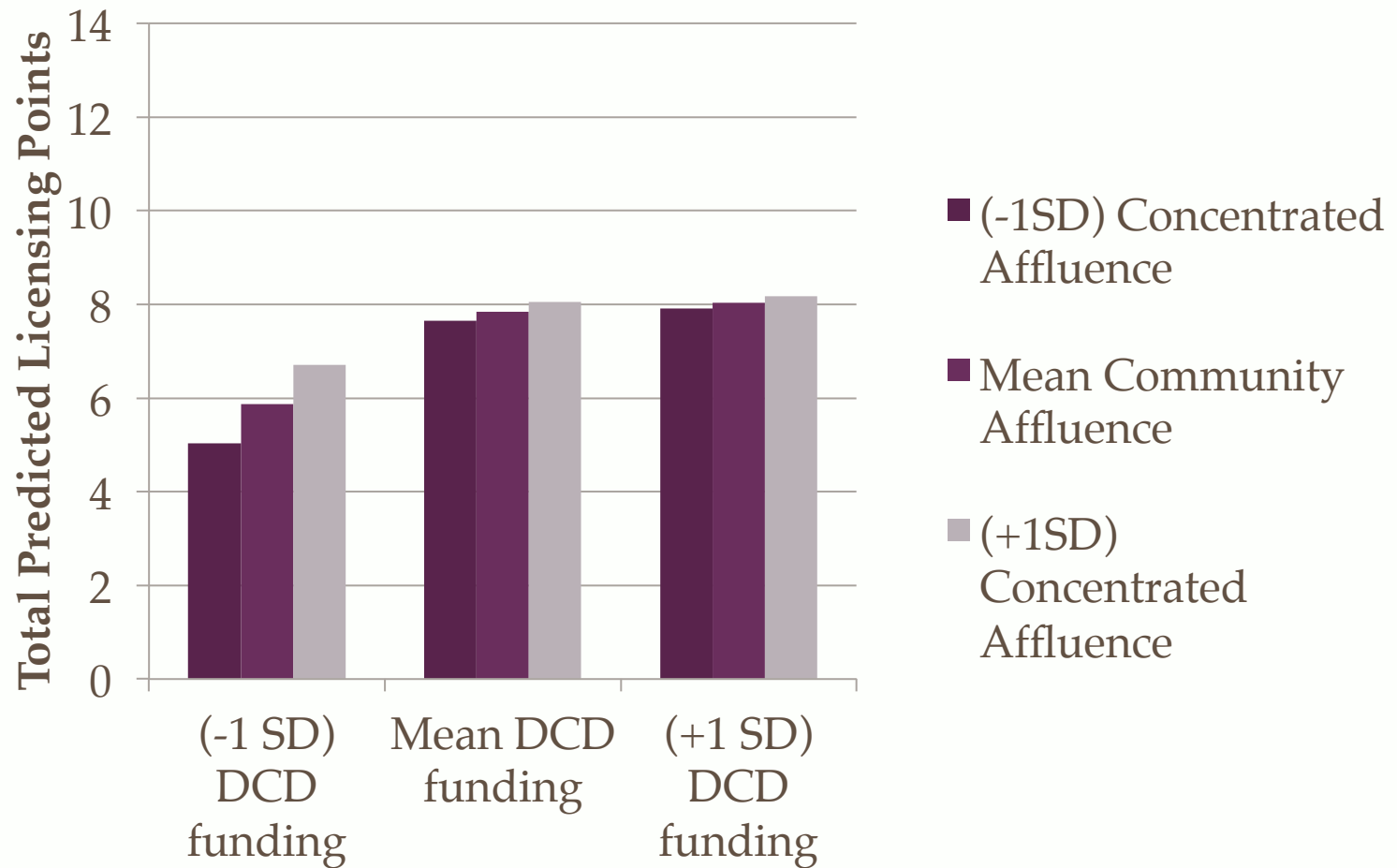
Main Effects for Child Care Centers



Child Care Center Total Points by Head Start Funding and Community Affluence



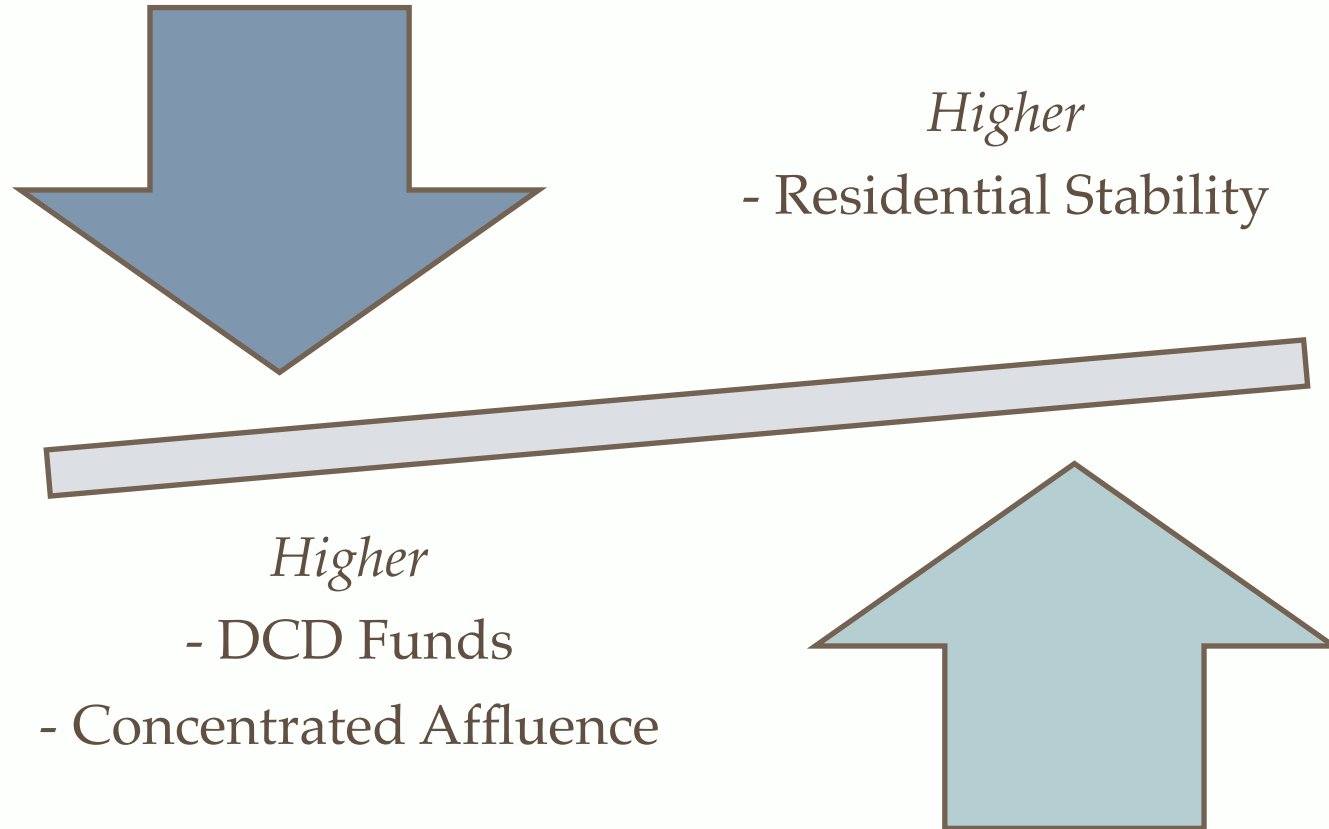
Child Care Center Total Points by DCD Subsidy Funding and Community Affluence



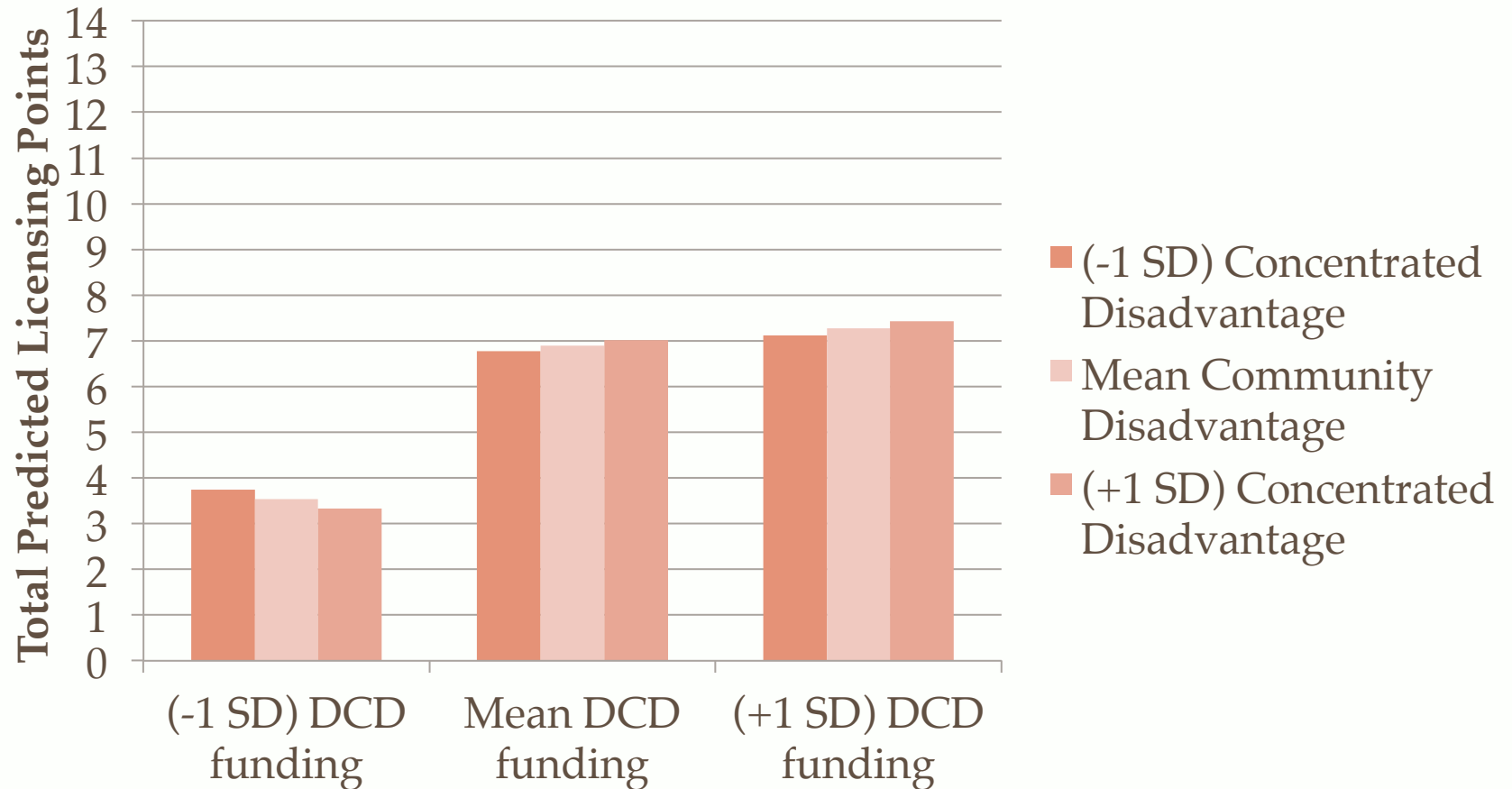
Research Question

- 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



Family Child Care Homes Total Points by DCD Subsidy Funding and Community 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]**



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Hatfield, B. E., Lower, J. K., Cassidy, D. J., & Faldowski, R. A. (in press).

Inequities in access to quality early care and education: Associations with funding and community context. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. doi: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.01.001. [Special Issue: QRIS as Change Agents]

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