**INTRODUCTION**

- Preschool is a critical period for language and cognitive development, which plays a crucial role in predicting a child’s successful transition into formal schooling (Manzi et al., 2015).
- Children who enter school with better cognitive and language abilities benefit more from classroom instruction (Haskins & Rouse, 2005), and have higher reading and math achievement (Duncan et al., 2007).
- Much is known about what practices promote early child development and learning, but little attention is given to the effects of where children live.
- Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is a useful framework for understanding the effects of context on children.

**DISCUSSION**

- **Neighborhood education**: An increase in the percentage of individuals in the neighborhood with a high school degree or less significantly predicted a decrease in children’s math and reading scores regardless of geographic setting.
- **Neighborhood racial makeup**: An increase in the percentage of individuals from a minority background significantly predicted a decrease in math, reading, and vocabulary scores regardless of geographic setting.

**RESULTS**

1. What is the relationship between the characteristics of preschool children’s neighborhoods and their vocabulary and achievement?

- **Neighborhood income**: The effect of median neighborhood income was significant for rural only. The effect of increasing median income was significantly smaller on math and vocabulary scores for rural children than for those in urban areas.
- **Neighborhood household composition**: In urban areas, children living in neighborhoods with higher percentages of female-headed households had lower math and vocabulary scores. For rural areas, higher percentages of female-headed households were associated with significantly higher math and vocabulary scores than urban areas.
- **Neighborhood mobility**: In rural areas only, an increase in the percentage of individuals living in a different house one year ago predicted higher vocabulary scores. There was no effect of neighborhood mobility on urban children.

- **Neighborhood mobility**: A significant effect on rural children’s achievement, but in the unspecified direction. This may be due to sampling error, or other unknown explanations.
- **Population**: The differential effects of neighborhood characteristics on children’s academic outcomes between urban and rural areas suggest that the effects of neighborhood characteristics may vary by a broader context than has been previously recognized.

- **Future directions**: To examine the mechanisms through which differential effects of neighborhood characteristics in urban and rural areas occur.
- **Exploration**: Explore neighborhood variations among rural communities.
- **Examine**: Changes in neighborhood longitudinal, as children transition into formal schooling and move through elementary grades.
- **Explore**: The effects of neighborhood characteristics on social-emotional and behavioral outcomes in young children.