



CAS 2012 Research Brief #1

Study Design

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Introduction

The 2012 Chicago Area Study surveyed 229 center directors in 33 ZIP Codes on the West and North sides of Chicago. We prepared a set of initial research briefs to disseminate basic study findings. This CAS 2012 Research Brief #1 summarizes the study goals and design and describes how we classified the 33 ZIP Codes into five types.

Study Goals

The overarching goal of the 2012 Chicago Area Study was to reveal how early childhood programs were coping with the “great recession” and how this economic crisis may be widening disparities in access to early childhood programs. The study also examined four central themes: (1) disparities in access to and utilization of child care, (2) providers’ knowledge, experience, and attitudes toward state and local programs and policies, (3) providers’ knowledge of and relationships with other child care providers and other service providers in the community, and (4) how providers perceived professional definitions of child care quality and alternative cultural definitions of child care quality.

Study Design

Figure 1 (page four) summarizes the design of the 2012 CAS. As shown, the target population for the study was 33 ZIP Codes on Chicago’s West and North sides. We began with a list of centers extracted from the Illinois Action for Children resource and referral database in November 2011. We excluded preschools located in public schools from this list because of organizational differences that would have required major differences in survey instruments (e.g., principals rather than directors overseeing the preschool classrooms). We also used web-based sources to supplement the Illinois Action for Children list because it did not include all license-exempt preschools, such as those operated by private schools or churches. For simplicity, we refer to all participants as “centers.”

We divided the list into two groups. One group participated in phone interviews conducted by the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Survey Research Lab. The other group was interviewed in-person

by UIC graduate students. Both groups completed a structured survey that covered the four study themes (described in Study Goals above).

The in-person participants completed four additional components. One was a “Features of Care” survey in which directors rated various aspects of child care quality as characteristic of different types of care settings. Another was a “Video Task” in which directors watched short video clips and then discussed what they saw, especially in relation to aspects of quality that support children’s learning and behavioral regulation. In a “Map Task” directors described their relationships with a dozen or so centers in their area. Interviewers also completed a “Neighborhood Observations Task” in which they recorded various features of the center’s facilities and local neighborhood such as signage on the building, upkeep of the grounds, businesses on the street, and retail stores on the block.

Because our goal was 300 completed interviews, we attempted interviews with every center director on the lists for each ZIP Code. SRL completed 201 phone surveys, with a 70% response rate (Diffenderffer & Retzer, 2012, p. 5). UIC graduate students completed 28 in-person interviews, with a 72.5% response rate. All interviews were completed in the late spring and summer of 2012.

In practice, the study covers 31 of the 33 selected ZIP Codes. Two selected ZIP Codes had very few centers (four and one respectively) and had no completed interviews.

Five ZIP Code Types

Because of our interest in studying how child care characteristics varied by neighborhood demographics, we classified the 31 ZIP Codes into five types: (1) mixed race, low income, (2) majority non-Hispanic Black, low income, (3) majority Hispanic, low income, (4) majority non-Hispanic White, middle income, and (5) majority non-Hispanic White, high income. The cutoffs between low/middle and between middle/high income were \$48,500 and \$70,000 respectively (about two and three times the federal poverty line for a family of four in 2011). We defined a location as being a majority of one race-ethnicity if the ZIP Code was comprised of at least 50% of that racial/ethnic group.

Table 1 (page 3) shows the number of ZIP Codes and number of completed interviews in each type of ZIP Code. We had at least 35 completed interviews in each type of ZIP Code to support analyses.

Table 2 (page 3) provides the racial-ethnic and income characteristics of the ZIP Codes. These values reflect the cutoffs described above to define the five ZIP Code types.

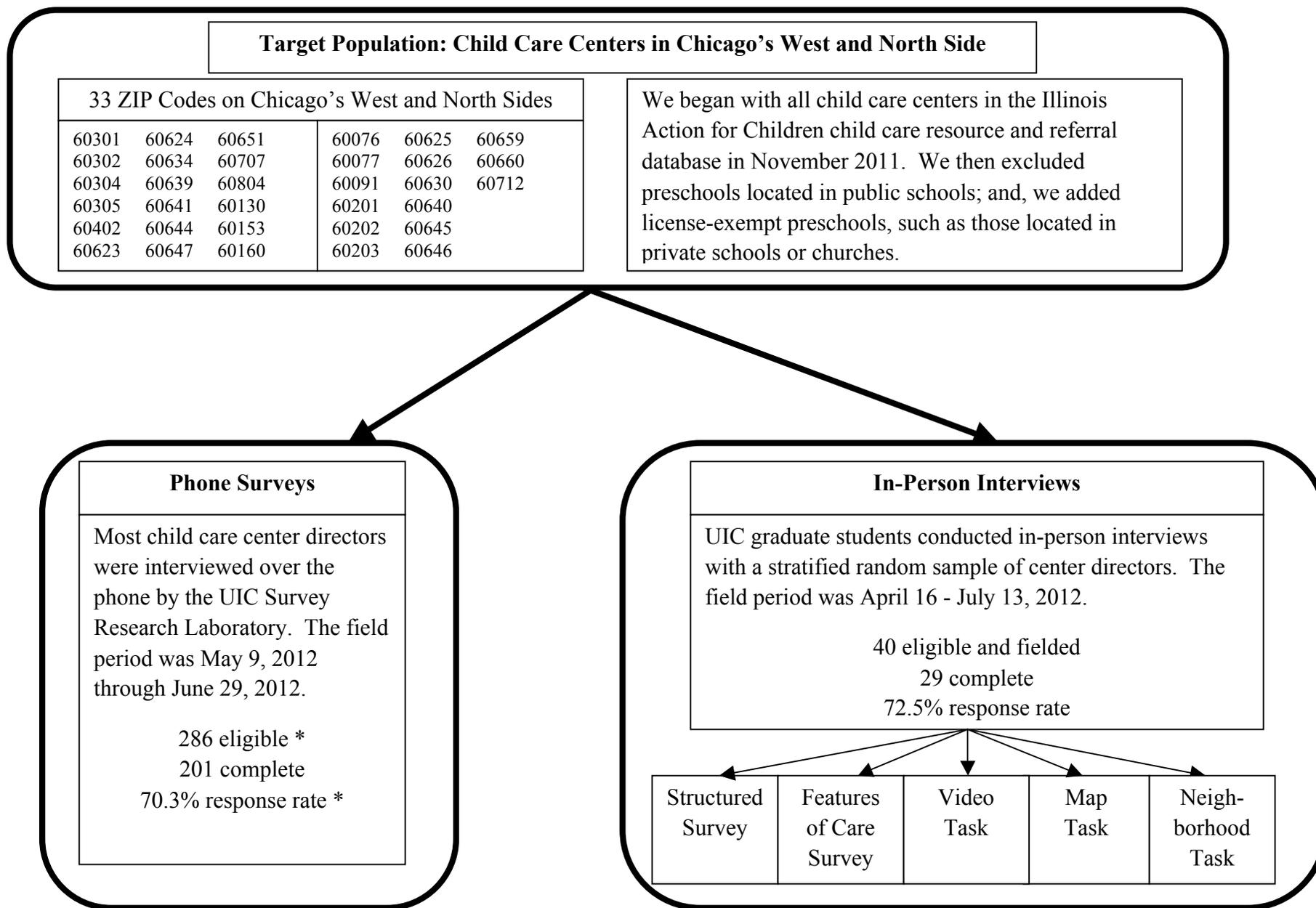
Table 1. Number of ZIP Codes and Number of Centers, by ZIP Code Type

	Number of ZIP Codes	Number of Centers (with CAS interviews)
Mixed race, low income	5	36
Majority Black, low income	4	35
Majority Hispanic, low income	5	54
Majority White, middle income	9	51
Majority White, high income	8	53
Total	31	229

Table 2. Racial-ethnic and Income Characteristics of ZIP Codes, by ZIP Code Type

	Median Family Income			Average Percentage		
	Min	Median	Max	Non-Hispanic Black	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic White
Mixed race, low income	\$34,779	\$40,863	\$48,209	15%	25%	40%
Majority Black, low income	\$25,265	\$32,878	\$47,135	86%	10%	3%
Majority Hispanic, low income	\$29,137	\$40,883	\$47,200	12%	66%	20%
Majority White, middle income	\$48,639	\$56,544	\$66,778	11%	17%	61%
Majority White, high income	\$70,789	\$85,917	\$122,794	9%	5%	74%

Figure 1. The Design of the 2012 Chicago Area Study



* The number of eligible centers and response rate is calculated using AAPOR's response rate 3 (RR3) method. The 286 eligible cases includes 208 cases known to be eligible and 89.7% of the 87 cases that could not be contacted and were of unknown eligibility (Diffenderffer & Retzer, 2012, p. 5).

About the Study

The Chicago Area Study is a biennial study that collects survey data on life in the Chicago metropolitan area. Its purpose is to collect original social science data that inform policymaking and social science theory, provide hands-on methods training to students in survey research methods, and fund faculty research on pressing issues in the metro area.

The overarching goal of the 2012 Chicago Area Study was to reveal how early childhood programs were coping with the “great recession” and how this economic crisis may be widening disparities in access to early childhood programs. The study also examined four central themes: (1) disparities in access to and utilization of child care, (2) providers’ knowledge, experience, and attitudes toward state and local programs and policies, (3) providers’ knowledge of and relationships with other child care providers and other service providers in the community, and (4) how providers perceived professional definitions of child care quality and alternative cultural definitions of child care quality.

Rachel Gordon, Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), was the faculty investigator for the 2012 Chicago Area Study.

Anna Colaner, Graduate Student in the UIC Department of Sociology, was the project director for the 2012 Chicago Area Study. Many additional UIC students helped design the study and collect the data.

Maria Krysan, Professor in the Department of Sociology and Institute of Government and Public Affairs at UIC, directs the Chicago Area Study.

The UIC Survey Research Lab conducted phone interviews with center directors.

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We are also grateful to Illinois Action for Children for partnering with us on the study, and to the center directors who generously devoted time to participating.

Additional information is available online: <http://igpa.uillinois.edu/cas/>

References

Diffenderffer, A. & Retzer, K. (2012). 2012 Chicago Area Study Methodological Report. Chicago, IL: UIC Survey Research Laboratory.