



CAS 2012 Research Brief #2

Basic Description of Center Care in Chicago West and North Side ZIP Codes

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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. All centers and preschools that served three and four year olds in these ZIP Codes were eligible, except those located in the public schools. Eligible settings included preschools in churches, private schools, and community organizations as well as preschool programs and full-day care in standalone child care centers. Fully 70% of eligible directors participated in the study. For simplicity we refer to all participants as “centers.”

We prepared a set of initial research briefs to disseminate basic study findings. Each of these briefs describes a set of data collected in the survey for the sample as a whole and across five types of ZIP Codes. The five ZIP Code types allow us to provide a basic portrait of differences in center characteristics depending on the race-ethnicity and income of the community. The five types of ZIP Codes are: (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 are \$48,500 and \$70,000 respectively (about two and three times the federal poverty line for a family of four in 2011). We define a location as being a majority of one race-ethnicity if the ZIP Code is comprised of at least 50% of that racial/ethnic group (see CAS 2012 Research Brief #1 for additional details).

This CAS 2012 Research Brief #2 provides a basic description of the centers and directors, including the center’s organizational structure, the demographic makeup of teachers and children, and the education level and experience of the director. Because of the study’s focus on preschool, questions about children generally focused on three and four year olds and questions about teachers focused on classrooms comprised of those preschool-aged children.

The table at the end of this document presents means and proportions for the variables, and tables of supplementary information (including statistical tests) are available from the study investigators. Here we highlight some of the major results.

General Characteristics of Centers

Most centers on Chicago's West and North sides that cared for three and four year olds also cared for younger children (ages two and under; 82% of centers) and many also cared for school aged children (ages six and older; 47% of centers). On average, centers had about three preschool classrooms.

Most centers charged tuition (83%), although fully one-third offered sliding scale rates. Over two-fifths of centers operated for profit (44%) and the majority (56%) were part of another organization. Affiliations ranged, including national chains, local chains, religious organizations, and schools; up to one-fifth of centers belonged to each type of affiliation.

Preschoolers typically lived in the same community as the center, but preschool teachers often lived outside of the community. For example, whereas about 40% of centers reported that all preschoolers lived in the community, just one-quarter of centers reported that this was true of the preschool teachers.

Given the racial diversity of the study ZIP Codes, it is not surprising that both preschoolers and their teachers came from a range of racial-ethnic backgrounds. In the sample as a whole, centers were nearly evenly divided in reporting that the majority of preschoolers and their teachers were Black, Hispanic and White. Reflecting the early childhood field as a whole, most teachers were female, although over 10% of centers reported that at least one preschool teacher was male.

Most centers rented their space (60%) although over one quarter owned their building and slightly more than 10% had their space donated. About one-quarter of centers also relied on donations for classroom materials. Centers varied considerably in unfilled capacity; about one-fifth reported that they very often had preschool slots that remained unfilled for more than a week while about a quarter reported that they never did so.

General Characteristics of Directors

As was the case among teachers, most directors were female (97%). Directors came from a range of racial-ethnic backgrounds, although they were less often Hispanic than were teachers or children (just 14% of all directors were Hispanic). Not surprisingly, most directors had at least an associate's degree; about two-fifths reported a bachelor's degree and another two-fifths a master's degree or more. The majority (89%) had degrees in early childhood education or a related field. Relatively few – just one quarter – had an Illinois Director's Credential, and about one-third had other early childhood certificates or credentials. The directors had considerable experience, averaging 20 years in the field of early childhood education and 8 years as director of the studied center.

Variation by ZIP Code Type

Some differences across our five types of ZIP Codes were sensible given the different economic resources of residents. For example, nearly all centers in the middle and high-income areas charged tuition and less than one-fifth of centers in these areas used a sliding scale. In contrast, across the low-income areas a smaller fraction charged tuition and more offered a sliding scale. In the majority Black, low-income ZIP Codes fully 40% of centers did not charge tuition and 62% of those who did charge tuition offered sliding scale rates.

The organizational characteristics of centers also varied across ZIP Codes. For-profit centers were most common in middle-income, majority White areas (where nearly 60% of centers operated for profit) and least

common in high-income, majority White areas (just 30% for profit), with low-income areas falling in between (39% to 47% for profit). Organizational affiliations also varied across areas. For example, religious affiliations were most common in the mixed-race, low-income and the majority White, high-income areas (where about one-fifth were part of a church or synagogue). Majority Black, low-income ZIP Codes were particularly unlikely to have centers affiliated with schools or churches (less than 10%). These centers in majority Black, low-income areas were also much more likely to rent their space (79%) and less likely to own their own building (9%) than other centers.

Across ZIP Codes, there were a number of similarities in the fraction of preschoolers and their teachers who lived in the community. However, centers located in majority Black, low-income ZIP Codes stood out in being most likely to say that all of their children lived in the community (63%) but least likely to report that all of the teachers did so (just 14%). In contrast, 27-47% of other center directors reported that all of the children lived in the community and 19-36% reported that all of the teachers did so.

The racial-ethnic distribution of preschoolers and teachers varied across the ZIP Codes in generally predictable ways. One notable finding, however, was that even in the majority Hispanic, low-income ZIP Codes, less than half of the centers reported that the majority of their teachers were Hispanic. This is in contrast to centers located in majority Black low-income ZIP Codes (where almost 90% reported that teachers were mostly Black) and majority White high-income areas (where over three-quarters reported that teachers were mostly White).

Like the race-ethnicity of teachers and students, the race-ethnicity of directors reflected the racial-ethnic makeup of the ZIP Code as a whole. Again, directors were unlikely to be Hispanic, even in majority Hispanic ZIP Codes (just 37%).

There was considerable similarity in the educational credentials and experience of directors across ZIP Codes. The directors in the majority Hispanic and two majority White areas did have somewhat higher education levels than those in the low-income areas that were mixed race or majority Black (at least 37% versus at most 30% with a masters degree or more). Directors in the majority White, high-income and majority Hispanic, low-income areas were also least likely to have the Illinois Director's Credential (about 20% or less versus at least 30% in the other areas).

Summary

This research brief provides a basic description of the centers and directors who participated in the 2012 CAS. An expected but important finding is the difference in resources between centers located in poor versus affluent communities. We summarize some of the most striking differences in Figure 1, revealing the stark differences in reliance on private tuition, organizational affiliations, rental space, and directors' education between centers located in the least and most well off areas. Another notable finding is that few teachers and few directors are Hispanic, even in majority Hispanic ZIP Codes. In Figure 2 we highlight this finding by summarizing the percentage of children, teachers and directors who share the race of the majority of ZIP Code residents. This reinforces others' calls for shoring up the early childhood workforce and ensuring a diverse supply of preschool teachers. Hispanic children are less likely than White and Black children to attend preschool, and ensuring the cultural relevance of local programs may be one way to encourage attendance. We will delve deeper into each of these findings in future briefs and reports.

Figure 1. Select Characteristics of Centers in Poor and Affluent Zip Codes

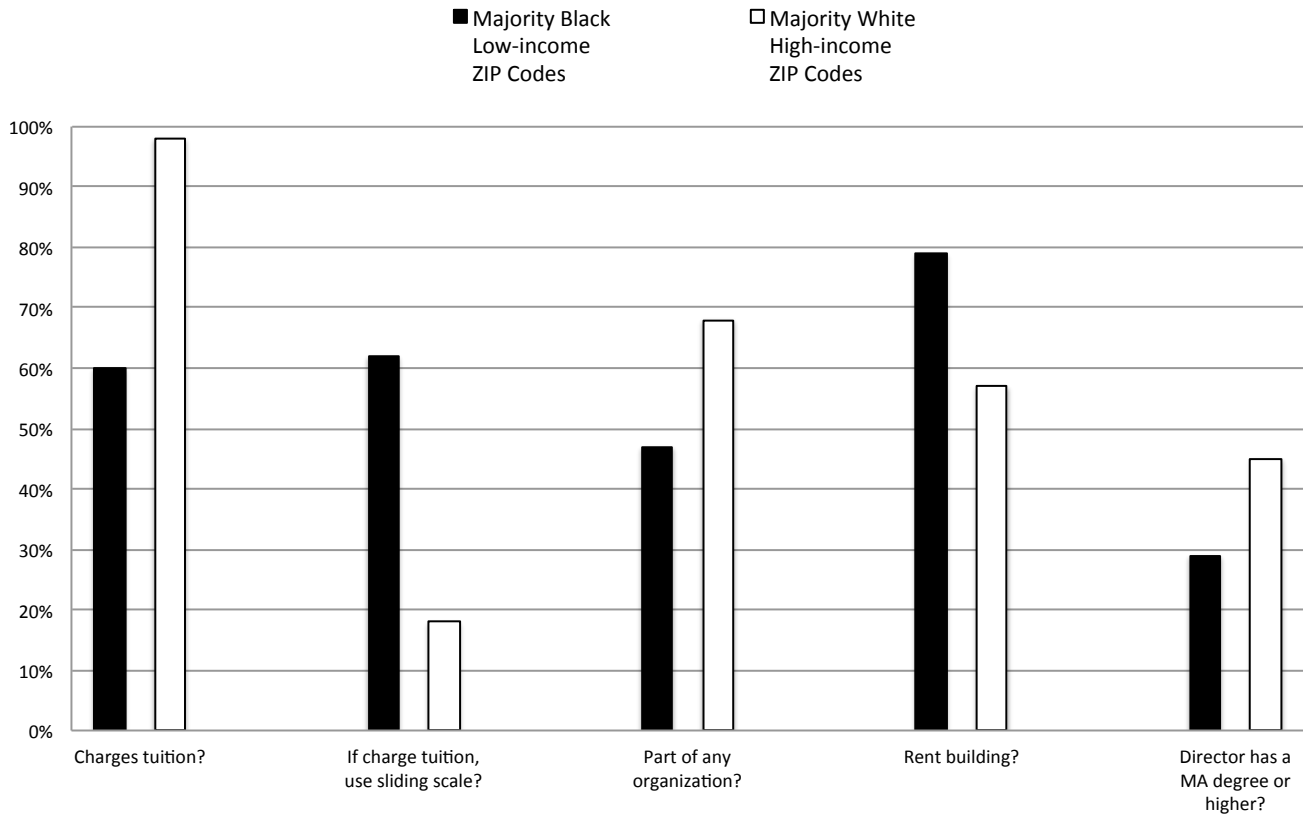


Figure 2. Race-ethnicity of Children, Teachers and Directors

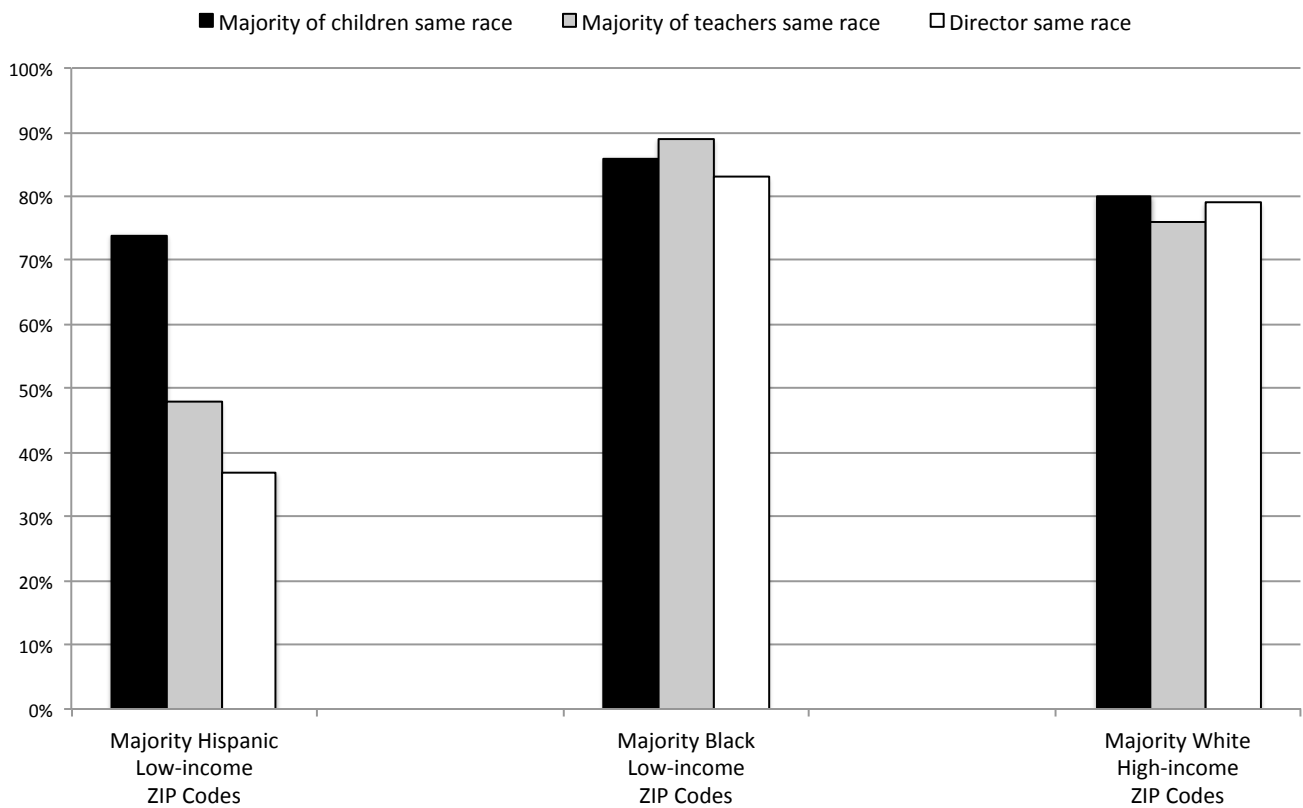


Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Basic Characteristics of Centers and Directors in the CAS 2012

	Sample Size	Overall Mean	Overall Standard Deviation	Means within Types of ZIP Codes				
				Mixed Race Low Income	Majority Black Low Income	Majority Hispanic Low Income	Majority White Middle Income	Majority White High Income
Characteristics of Center								
Enrolls children 2 and under?	229	82%		78%	80%	81%	86%	81%
Enrolls children 6 and older?	229	47%		47%	40%	59%	47%	38%
Number of preschool classrooms	229	2.89	2.18	2.69	2.74	2.80	2.86	3.23
Charges tuition?	227	83%		78%	60%	76%	96%	98%
If charge tuition, use sliding scale?	189	33%		39%	62%	51%	16%	18%
For profit?	226	44%		42%	39%	47%	59%	30%
Part of any organization?	222	56%		65%	47%	46%	53%	68%
Part of national chain?	226	7%		11%	9%	7%	8%	2%
Part of local chain?	225	16%		19%	15%	17%	24%	6%
Part of a church or synagogue?	229	14%		19%	9%	9%	10%	23%
Part of a school?	229	14%		22%	3%	13%	12%	19%
Part of another organization?	228	18%		29%	23%	13%	8%	23%
Fraction of preschool teachers who live in community where center is located								
None of them	228	11%		6%	11%	11%	10%	17%
About one quarter	228	21%		22%	14%	26%	14%	25%
About half	228	22%		25%	31%	20%	20%	17%
About three quarters	228	21%		11%	29%	22%	22%	23%
All of them	228	25%		36%	14%	20%	34%	19%
Fraction of three and four year olds who live in community where center is located								
None of them	229	0%		0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
About one quarter	229	4%		0%	0%	4%	4%	9%
About half	229	14%		19%	0%	13%	20%	15%
About three quarters	229	42%		33%	37%	41%	49%	47%
All of them	229	39%		47%	63%	41%	27%	28%
Race-ethnicity of majority of three and four year olds								
Black	226	29%		31%	86%	22%	12%	14%
Hispanic	226	35%		36%	14%	74%	41%	2%
White	226	31%		19%	0%	4%	43%	80%
Asian	226	4%		11%	0%	0%	4%	4%
Other	226	0%		3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Race-ethnicity of any three and four year olds								
Black	226	72%		72%	100%	78%	69%	50%
Hispanic	226	69%		81%	51%	93%	78%	36%
White	226	64%		61%	20%	50%	80%	94%
Asian	226	32%		61%	6%	7%	33%	54%
Race-ethnicity of majority of preschool teachers								
Black	227	31%		25%	89%	26%	20%	14%
Hispanic	227	24%		17%	9%	48%	31%	6%
White	227	39%		44%	3%	24%	37%	76%
Asian	227	6%		11%	0%	2%	12%	4%
Other	227	0%		3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Race-ethnicity of any preschool teachers								
Black	227	50%		50%	100%	50%	33%	31%
Hispanic	227	49%		33%	40%	70%	65%	27%
White	227	59%		58%	23%	46%	69%	88%
Asian	227	13%		31%	0%	7%	22%	6%

(Table continues)

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Basic Characteristics of Centers and Directors in the CAS 2012 (continued)

	Sample Size	Overall Mean	Overall Standard Deviation	Means within Types of ZIP Codes				
				Mixed Race Low Income	Majority Black Low Income	Majority Hispanic Low Income	Majority White Middle Income	Majority White High Income
Any preschool teachers are male?	229	13%		8%	17%	13%	18%	9%
Payment type for space								
Rent building	222	60%		62%	79%	54%	57%	57%
Own building	222	27%		24%	9%	31%	31%	33%
Space donated	222	13%		15%	12%	15%	12%	10%
Rely mostly on donations for classroom material:	229	23%		22%	20%	33%	14%	25%
Serve meals and snacks?	226	99%		97%	100%	98%	100%	100%
How often do slots remain unfilled for more than one week?								
Never	227	25%		26%	23%	31%	20%	23%
Sometimes	227	40%		49%	40%	43%	43%	27%
Often	227	16%		6%	23%	11%	22%	19%
Very often	227	19%		20%	14%	15%	16%	31%
Characteristics of Director								
Female	229	97%		94%	97%	96%	98%	98%
Race-ethnicity								
Black	228	32%		36%	83%	30%	16%	12%
Hispanic	228	14%		11%	3%	37%	14%	0%
White	228	45%		39%	11%	28%	57%	79%
Asian	228	5%		11%	0%	0%	10%	4%
Other	228	4%		3%	3%	6%	4%	6%
Highest level of education								
High school degree	229	2%		3%	6%	2%	0%	2%
Associate degree	229	17%		19%	14%	19%	25%	9%
Bachelor's degree	229	43%		47%	51%	39%	37%	43%
Master's degree	229	31%		22%	26%	31%	33%	38%
Beyond a master's degree	229	7%		8%	3%	9%	4%	8%
Any degrees in early childhood education (or related field)	229	89%		97%	89%	83%	94%	83%
Have an Illinois Director's Credential?								
No	228	74%		67%	69%	81%	68%	79%
Yes, Level I	228	5%		8%	11%	0%	8%	2%
Yes, Level II	228	10%		17%	9%	13%	4%	9%
Yes, Level III	228	5%		3%	3%	4%	6%	8%
Yes, Level Unknown	228	6%		6%	9%	2%	14%	2%
Have other ECE certificates or credentials?	227	32%		40%	34%	31%	36%	21%
Years director of this center	228	8.34	7.59	9.53	6.51	7.22	8.36	9.92
Years in ECE field	228	20.28	9.74	19.44	19.40	18.69	20.51	22.87

Note. ECE = early childhood education. The ZIP Code categories are defined in CAS 2012 Brief #1. In the overall sample of 229 there are at least 35 centers within each ZIP Code category.

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