

Chapter 2

WHO WERE THE FAMILIES, CHILDREN, AND CAREGIVERS?

The families who participated in the Community Child Care Research Project were recruited by research assistants in public places (e.g., public libraries, community centers, etc.), schools (vocational-technical, GED classes, state university, etc.), and government agency offices (e.g., workforce development services, WIC -Women, Infants, and Children, Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) voucher offices; etc.). Care was taken to recruit an equal number of families in each community (approximately 76 in each community) and approximately equal numbers of families with infant/toddlers and preschool-age children. A total of 307 low-income working families whose young children were in out-of-home child care were recruited to participate.

Several eligibility criteria were established to ensure the sample represented low-income working families with young children in out-of-home care. These criteria included:

- annual family income less than \$35,000;
- head of the household is working (i.e., employed, going to school, or in job-training at least 20 hours per week);
- family has a child between 6 months and 5 years old, and the child is in out-of-home care at least 15 hours per week for the past 2 months;
- family is not enrolled in TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families);
- child care provider agrees to participate.

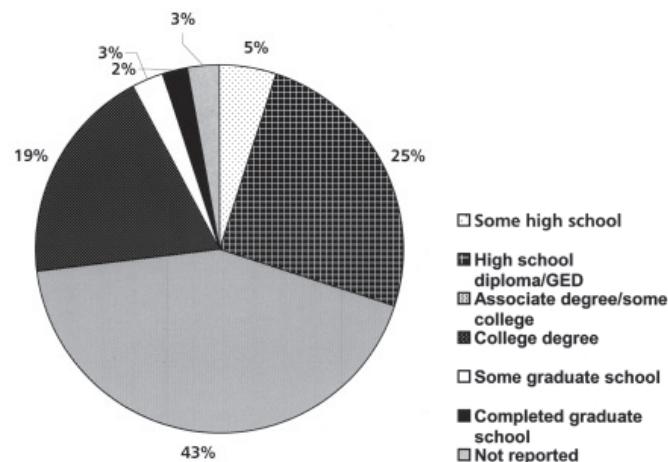
WHO WERE THE FAMILIES?

The 307 low-income working families were recruited from urban communities in St. Joseph, Marion, Allen, and Lake counties in Indiana (ns = 78, 76, 76, 77, respectively). We recruited families from Indianapolis in Marion County; from Fort Wayne in Allen County; from Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago in Lake County; and from South Bend in St. Joseph County. Statistical tests revealed families did not differ in their demographic characteristics across communities. (See Table C1 in Appendix C for a detailed summary of characteristics of the 307 families.)

In general the participating low-income working families had the following characteristics:

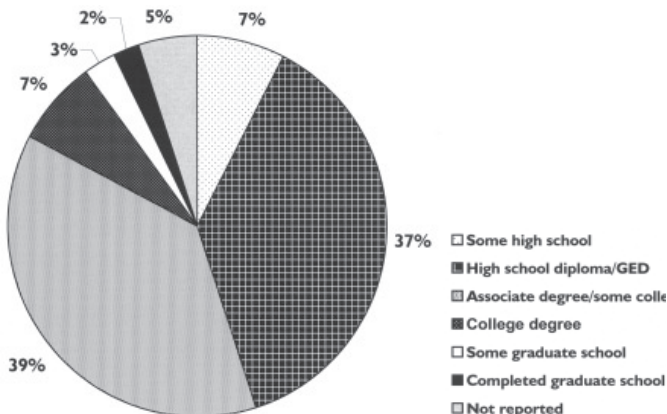
- Almost two-thirds of parents reported an annual income below the federal poverty level for a four-person family in 2002, \$18,100 per year, or less than \$1,500 per month. One-third of the participating families earned less than \$9,600 per year, or less than \$800 per month.
- Thirty percent of the parents were married, remarried, or living with a partner, while two-thirds of the parents (68%) were single and had no partner, or were divorced, or widowed.
- More than half (56%) of the parents were the only adult living in the household, while 34% identified one other adult living in the household. The remaining parents indicated an additional two to five adults resided in their household.
- The average number of children living in each household was two. A majority of the families reported one, two, or three children living in their household, but some reported up to eight children living in their household.
- Sixty percent of the families reported no male head of household. Among the 116 families identifying a male head of household, most (72%) identified the child's father as that person. The majority of male heads of household were employed (89%) and had a high school education or above (73%).

FIGURE 2.1. MALE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD EDUCATION LEVEL



- Except for five families who did not report female heads of the household, all families identified one female head in the household. Most female heads of household were the child's mother (88%). The majority of these women were employed (83%) and had a high school education or above (88%).

FIGURE 2.2. FEMALE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD EDUCATION LEVEL



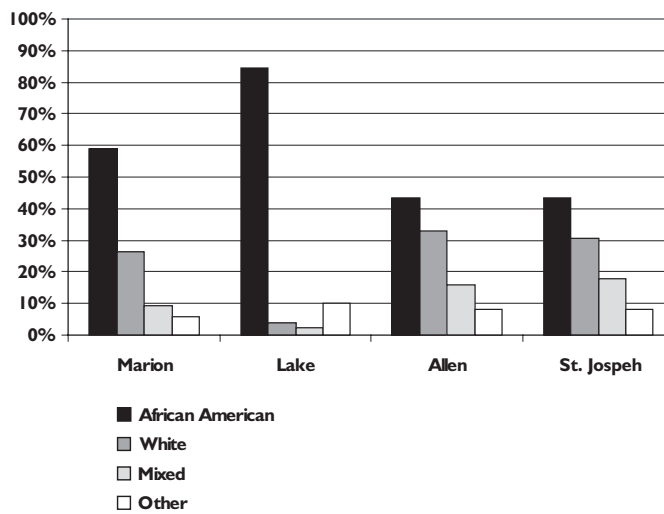
WHO WERE THE CHILDREN?

There were 307 participating children. (See Table C2 in Appendix C for a detailed summary of characteristics of the 307 children.) Here is a summary of their general characteristics:

- The children in the study ranged in age from 6 months to 6 years. Forty percent of children were under 36 months of age, while 60 % were 36 to 72 months of age.
- There were approximately equal numbers of boys and girls.
- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the children were African American, 23% were White, 3% were Latino, 1 % were Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 14% were mixed race or ethnicity was not reported.
- Most children lived with their mothers (96%) but only 25% lived with their fathers. Twenty-four percent of children lived with both their mother and father. One child lived only with his/her father while 61% of children lived only with their mother. An additional 9% lived with their mother and another adult, other than the child's father or mother's partner. This could include a grandparent, relative, or friend. Two percent lived with their mother and mother's partner.

Statistical tests revealed the characteristics of families were not different across the four community sites, except for the distribution of children's race. Figure 2.3 displays child's race in the four communities. The sample in Lake County had 84% African American children and very few White children (4%).

FIGURE 2.3. CHILD'S RACE IN FOUR COMMUNITIES



WHO WERE THE CAREGIVERS IN THE CHILD CARE SETTINGS?

To be included in the study, both eligible families and their primary child care providers needed to volunteer to participate. A small number of providers declined to participate. Overall, the refusal rate for providers was 14%. Reasons for refusal included the closing of the child care setting, provider had too much going on, and the provider did not want to participate. However, refusal rates varied among the four communities. These differences in refusal rates may be attributed to the order of recruitment. Research assistants apparently became more skilled over time in recruitment of child care providers resulting in a decline in refusal rates over time. Lake County (the last county recruited) had the lowest refusal rate (5%) while Marion County had the highest (20%). Allen and St. Joseph counties had refusal rates of 16% and 19%, respectively. Table C3 in the Appendix C displays a summary of characteristics of the caregivers.

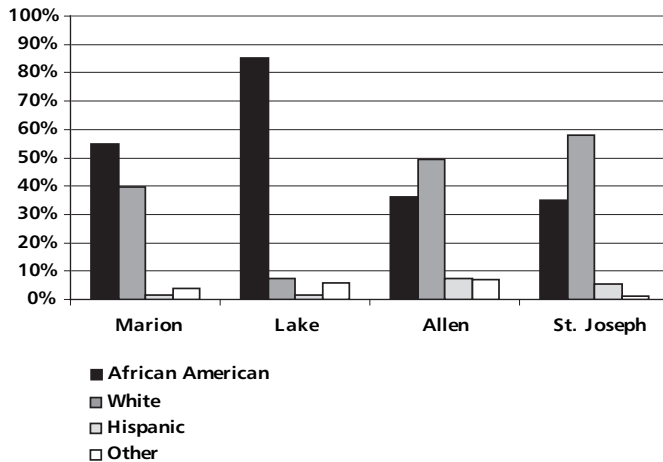
Unlike the family and child participants in the study, the characteristics of child care providers did vary considerably across communities, including age, family income, race, marital status, specialized training in early childhood education, and years of experience working with children.

- While the mean age of all caregivers was 39 years, caregivers in Lake County were about 10 years older than caregivers from the other three communities. The mean age of caregivers in Lake County was 46 years, compared to 35 to 37 years in other communities.
- About one-fourth of the caregivers reported a family income below the poverty level (\$18,100 per year, or less than

\$1,500 per month for a family of four). When communities were compared, caregivers in Marion County reported lower incomes than caregivers from other communities. Only 15% of caregivers in Marion County had a family income above \$3,000 per month, and a large majority (71%) had income between \$801 to \$3,000 per month. Although family income levels differed across communities, caregivers' personal income from child care work did not differ significantly from community to community. This suggests the caregivers in Marion County more often had to rely on their child care income, while caregivers in other communities often had other sources of family income.

- About half of the caregivers in the study sample were African American (49%). The second largest ethnic group was White (36%). Similar to children's race distribution, Lake County differed from other communities in that caregivers were predominantly African American (85%), with few White caregivers (7%). Figure 2.4 displays differences in caregivers' race in the four communities.

FIGURE 2.4. CAREGIVERS' RACE IN FOUR COMMUNITIES

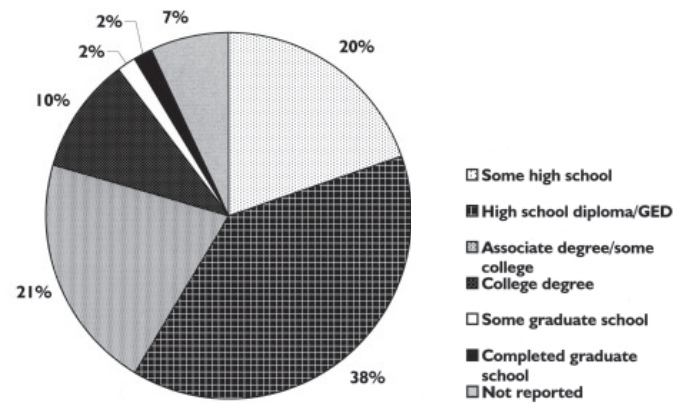


- More than half of the caregivers (57%) reported they were married, remarried, or living with a partner. Thirty-eight percent of the caregivers were single or had no partner, or were divorced or widowed. More caregivers in Lake County were divorced or widowed (21% compared to 8-12% in other communities) and fewer were single or reported no partner (15% compared to 27-38% in other communities). Also, a lower percentage of caregivers in Marion County (40%) were married than in other communities (50% or higher). The lower marriage rate in Marion County provides

an explanation for why those caregivers reported lower family incomes; they are less likely to have two incomes contributing to the overall family income.

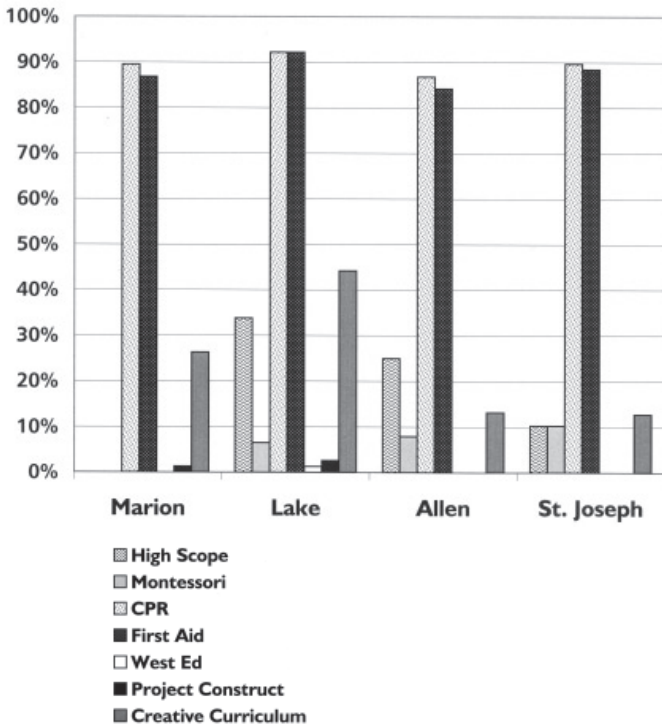
- There was no difference among the communities in caregiver education level. Figure 2.5 displays caregivers' general education. A majority of the caregivers had at least a high school diploma or GED (92%). Almost 70% (67%) had some college and 24% had at least a four year college degree.

FIGURE 2.5. CAREGIVER EDUCATION LEVEL IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES



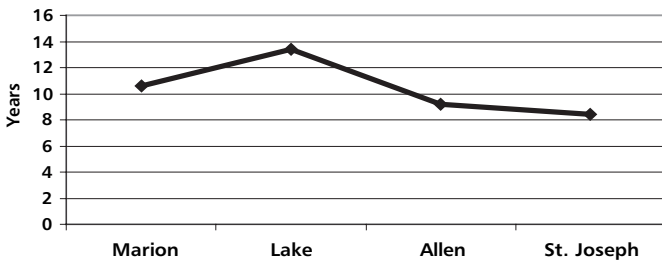
- Less than half of the caregivers (41%) indicated they had at least one specialized early childhood credential (e.g., early childhood teaching certificate, child development associate, Montessori certificate, early childhood special education endorsement, or kindergarten endorsement). However, this differed across communities. Approximately half of the caregivers in Marion and Lake Counties (48% & 52%, respectively) had at least one early childhood credential, compared to only 26% of the caregivers in St. Joseph County and 39% in Allen County.
- The majority of the caregiver sample (87%) had completed at least two specialized training programs. As expected, the two most frequently completed training programs were CPR and First Aid, as required by state regulation. Caregivers in Lake County reported more completed training programs than caregivers in the other three communities. Lake County caregivers averaged three completed training programs while the other three counties averaged two completed training programs. Figure 2.6 shows caregivers' training in the four communities.

FIGURE 2.6. CAREGIVER TRAINING IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES.



- Caregivers in Lake County reported more years of experience in child care profession than caregivers in St. Joseph and Allen Counties (average 13 years versus eight and nine years). Figure 2.7 displays means for the four communities.

FIGURE 2.7. CAREGIVERS' MEAN YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN CHILD CARE PROFESSION IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES.



HOW DOES SAMPLE OF FAMILIES COMPARE WITH THE GENERAL POPULATION OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN THESE FOUR COMMUNITIES?

Key demographic variables from our sample were compared to the 2000 census data of families with at least one child under the age of 6 and incomes below \$35,000 in the four urban communities of Indianapolis (Marion County), Gary (Lake County), Fort Wayne (Allen County), and South Bend (St. Joseph County).

Table C4 in Appendix C provides comparisons of our sample to these census data by community. There were some noticeable differences between the study samples and the census population. First, our sample reported a higher education level than the general low-income population. One of the sampling strategies relied on recruiting families from adult education centers, and this may have contributed to this difference. Also, those working or in school may have higher education levels than those who are not working or in school. Second, our sample consisted of greater percentage of single parents than the general population of low-income parents. While 57 % of our sample reported being single, 42 % of the low income census population reported being single. A greater discrepancy can be found in the percentage of those married. While 44% of the census population reported being married, only 17 % of our sample reported being married. This could be due to a greater reliance on non-parental care by single parents who are balancing work and family responsibilities without the help of another adult in the household, thus more likely to be recruited into our sample. We were unable to determine what proportion of low-income families from the census population were using child care. The distribution of race also differed. In each community, there was a greater proportion of African-Americans represented in our sample than would be expected from the general population census data.

Although the study sample did not match the general population of low-income parents and children in these cities, this relatively large sample of low-income working or in-school parents provides valuable information about an important and vulnerable low-income population. Since the welfare reform of 1996, federal policy has encouraged personal responsibility and self-sufficiency. These low income working families are doing just that: working, going to school and taking care of their children with little or no government assistance. They are not receiving TANF, and their incomes from employment make them less likely to receive child care vouchers that may be necessary to afford quality child care. Therefore, these families have limited choices when it comes to obtaining quality child care; cost rather than quality may have to be their first consideration.

CONCLUSIONS

Phase 2 of this research is based on a volunteer sample of 307 children and parents from low-income working families in four communities in northern and central Indiana. Children ranged in age between 6 months and 6 years. The typical parent participating in the study was a young, African American, single female



with at least a high school diploma and two children earning less than \$1500 per month. Her child's care provider was typically a 39-year-old African American woman with some college and some specialized training in early childhood education and child care. While the study sample did not exactly match the general

population of low-income parents and children in these cities, results from this large sample of low-income working or in-school parents will at least suggest patterns that may apply to the larger population of low income working parents and their children and child care providers during 2002-2003.