

Family Interactions with an Early Childhood Network

by

Megan Russell Johnson

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Pamela A. Moss, Chair
Professor Barry Checkoway
Professor Kenneth Frank
Associate Professor Donald J. Peurach
Professor Camille M. Wilson

Megan Russell Johnson

megrjohn@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0001-6397-5030

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to better understand the experiences of families as they navigate systems and networks to gain access to the opportunities they want and need for their themselves and for their children. The specific area of focus for this research is how families, and more specifically women and mothers, are entering into a Formal Early Childhood Network in Battle Creek, MI and gaining access to the *opportunities* available. According to Grant-Thomas and Powell (2006), one's ability to flourish is contingent on access to opportunities, which are differentially available based on race, gender, class and other matters of social difference. Gaining access into these networks and systems, with the support of family, friends and/or trusted organizations can potentially have a significant impact on the resources and opportunities women and children are able to use to contribute to improved outcomes.

One overarching question guides this study: How do families enter into and experience different features, opportunities and organizations in a Formal Early Childhood System Network? Addressing this question requires two sub-questions: 1) What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Formal Early Childhood System Network within the Battle Creek community?; and 2) What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Informal Networks of the families? These questions are addressed by analyzing information (websites, reports, meeting agendas and notes), by drawing on a social network analysis of 78 organizations in the early childhood system that has been conducted in the community as the result of a collaborative planning process, and through interviews with a purposeful sample of 7 families

with a child or children between the ages of 3-4 who live below 250% of poverty in Battle Creek and qualify for free public preschool or a childcare subsidy from the state. The data gathered provided a better understanding of the networks of people and organizations each family relies on to meet their personalized needs and desires for early childhood opportunities. Through the approach of combining the social network data with the qualitative case study data of the families, I have been able to construct an understanding of the network/system, that is nuanced enough that some key intervention points have been identified. Relevant findings include: 1) A tightly connected network of formal systems and services doesn't necessarily result in an improved experience for the end users, the women and families; 2) The Informal Networks of women in this study were extremely important in providing support *and* entry points to access opportunities; and 3) Key organizations within networks are more critical to families than others. These findings provide an opportunity to consider how network interventions might position those organizations differently within the network to improve the quality and flow of information through the network to enhance the experience and access for women and families.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Problem Statement

My dissertation research seeks to better understand the experiences of families as they navigate systems and networks to gain access to the opportunities they want and need for their themselves and for their children. I am operating from the assumption that too often when interventions or systems and networks are designed to serve families, the experiences, life situations and informal networks of the families are not well enough understood, valued or incorporated to most effectively support the achievement of optimal and equitable outcomes.

The identification of this problem and the operating assumption emerged as a result of my professional experience working as a practitioner in the nonprofit sector focusing on the connections between communities, schools and families; my experience as a program officer at a large foundation doing place-based grantmaking with the focus on supporting the development of an equitable early childhood system; and my lived experience as a mother of two young children – both of whom were born during the conceptualization and development of this dissertation. According to Ravitch and Riggan (2017), “...life experience tends to shape personal interests and goals more than detached intellectual questions.” Moreover, they suggest that in addition to experience, intuition is important (p 54.)

As a result, instead of starting my work with an understanding of what I wanted to contribute to the field as a researcher and knowing the gap that existed in literature, I started with a practical problem that was the result of on the ground experience. I began with a burning question of whether all of the time, effort and money that has been spent, by organizations,

fundors and other partners, to network and coordinate organizations and services for children and families actually improves the experience for the end users. This question was based on observation and familiarity with how such a system is structured in a community and a hunch (or intuition) that there are gaps in the system and that parents and families are not well enough integrated into these systems, including their own informal networks, to make long term sustained improvements in outcomes.

Study Goal and Purpose

My goal in conducting this research is that through a better understanding of the *design* (characteristics, structure, flow of information) of the *Formal Network/System* and the *Informal Network*¹ of the family, gaps will be discovered in the design of the networks, new or undocumented patterns of key interactions might appear and innovative or strengthened ways of working will emerge allowing families to access more of the opportunities, resources and supports needed to achieve equitable outcomes. The specific area of focus for this research is how families, and more specifically women and mothers, are entering into these Formal Networks and gaining access to the *opportunities* available. According to (Grant-Thomas & powell, 2006), one's ability to flourish is contingent on access to opportunities. They define opportunities as, "...resources and services that contribute to stability and advancement," and added that "Access to opportunity is not equally available to all. In American society, opportunity is produced and regulated by institutions, institutional interactions and individuals, jointly and differentially providing and enjoying access along lines of race, gender, class and

¹ The use of the terms Formal Network and Informal Network are meant to signify the different composition of networks in this study. I am defining the Formal Network as the collaboration of organizations in the Early Childhood System in Battle Creek. It is "formal" in the sense that it is made up of relationships among institutions, who are operating under both designed and emergent ways of interacting. I am defining the Informal Network as the relationships and interactions identified by the individuals or people in this study. It is "informal" in the sense that it is from the perspective of a person whose relationships are informal and not guided by a particular design.

other matters of social difference” (p. 5). This definition and characterization of opportunity guides this work and clarifies why how one is able to gain access to opportunities or entry into systems or networks matters so much. In a society where individual bias and systemic barriers exist for all women and even more so for women of color, gaining access into these networks and systems, with the support of family, friends and/or trusted organizations can potentially have a significant impact on the resources and opportunities women and children are able to use to contribute to improved outcomes. Part of the process of dismantling structures that perpetuate inequity is changing who is able to gain access as well as lifting up the real-life experiences people are having with such systems and creating opportunities for those narratives and people to help improve and intervene in that system, not just as recipients of services but at all levels of its operation as participants in its design and evolution.

Once these networks are better understood at this level of detail, it creates the ability to intervene and improve the structure and design to ensure more families are gaining access to the opportunities that are available. In the long run, the development of a more diverse network as that access is gained, supports the creation of an expectation for more equitable and appropriate opportunities for children and families within that system. This shift in the network is referred to as *network intervention*. Network interventions are efforts to use social networks or social network data, the type of data used in this study, to create change. The information can be used to create social influence, accelerate behavior change, improve performance or achieve desirable outcomes among individuals, communities, organizations or populations (Valente, 2012).

Background

The approach to addressing community challenges through collaborative and coordinated networks or systems is driven by the point of view, and evidence, that nonprofit organizations

working in isolation cannot address the significant social problems society is facing (i.e. poverty, inequitable educational outcomes, etc.). In isolation, organizations, nonprofits and even individual people don't have the necessary network capital to create change. Network capital² is a key concept in this study and is a form of social capital that makes resources available through interpersonal ties (Wellman and Frank, 2000). Network capital, or the who gives what to whom, (Wellman and Frank, 2000) is dependent on the giver and the receiver as well as the composition and structure of the network (both formal and informal) – which is a primary focus of this study.

Nonprofit organizations/agencies are an important part of social networks and connect individuals and organizations allowing the type of capacity or social capital (network capital) necessary to solve complex social problems (Backman and Smith, 2000; Berger and Neuhaus, 1977). Nonprofits facilitate the use of services, supporting people to interact more effectively with government and institutions, and protecting the wealth and assets of communities. However, as noted above, there is a breakdown that happens in communities when nonprofit organizations work in isolation. Complex social problems cannot be addressed by one or even two or three organizations working in isolation (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Systems of Care, 2010; Foster-Fishman et al. 2007). It takes coordinated efforts within a community to address challenges and remove barriers children and families face to experiencing positive developmental and educational outcomes. This type of coordination takes concerted effort and does not tend to naturally happen. Therefore, an intermediary organization is often a nonprofit organization whose mission/goals are to build connections in communities focused on children, families and education institutions including mediating between nonprofit organizations, for profit organizations, government, formal educational institutions and the individual or collective

² I use the term network capital because the term social capital can be problematic, which I will explain further later in the literature review.

relationships with children and families. What results from this level of coordination is a network or system that is often aligned around a specific social problem or goal. A prominent and relevant example of such a network in the literature, that had its beginnings in addressing complex problems in children's mental health, is referred to as a "system(s) of care".

In a special issue of *Evaluation and Program Planning* (2010) scholars trace the history of the system of care movement, discuss the definitions used in the field of children's mental health and expand the definition so it is applicable to a variety of different types of systems ranging from education to juvenile justice to child welfare. The definition I am adopting for my research was developed by Cook and Kilmer (2010) "A **system** of care is an adaptive **network** of structures, processes, and relationships embedded within the community and grounded in system-of-care values and principles³. A system of care provides youth and their families with the services and supports needed to **enable** them to live, work, learn and participate fully in their communities" (p. 20). I have bolded and italicized certain terms within this definition that are important to explore further and addressed in the literature review. The concept of systems of care is focused on developing or changing the landscape of how organizations work together in a system or network to better serve children and families. Cook & Kilmer (2010) intentionally worded it in such a way to show that systems of care have typically focused on the formal system or the organizations, social services, schools, etc. as opposed to considering the informal supports such as communities of faith, peers and extended family as part of the system that impacts outcomes for children and families. These informal supports are particularly relevant when seeking to redefine the types of network capital or supports that are valued in society as

³ Principles and values include Interagency Collaboration; Individualized and Strengths-Based Care; Cultural and Linguistic Competence; Child, Youth, and Family Involvement; Community-Based Approaches; and Accountability (Systems of Care Cross Site Evaluation, 2010)

well as to develop the types of network interventions that will lead to more equitable outcomes. Yosso (2005) discusses a related concept of “community cultural wealth” which helps to reframe what is valued and acknowledged, particularly in shifting to an asset-based recognition of the types of “wealth” in communities of color. Community cultural wealth appropriately recognizes the important role and value of the more informal systems such as family and personal networks. Among the benefits of better integrating the informal system/network of the family with the formal system of care are that it helps to support access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services (Hodges et al., 2010) and it recognizes the assets and strengths of diverse communities which can support the creation of systems that promote social and racial justice (Yosso, 2005).

Study Context

As noted above, while the concept of a system of care originated in children’s mental health, there is evidence of its use in education, child welfare and juvenile justice, as a few examples (Hodges, 2010). Given the complexity entailed in understanding systems of care, I have chosen to focus on one such system in depth. I am focusing specifically on an early childhood system network within one community – Battle Creek, Michigan. An early childhood system is an appropriate application of a system of care because by definition it is designed to coordinate across multiple organizations and sectors including education and child welfare, “An early childhood system includes early care and education and the elementary grades and also extends to embrace comprehensive services for young children, including health and mental health services. Early childhood systems usually address the needs of young children from birth to age 8” (Kagan and Kauerz, 2012, p. 9).

The Battle Creek community is also suitable for this study because it has a history of

investment of resources in the development of an early childhood system. It is also has a history of racial and socioeconomic segregation within the community, which are important areas of interest guiding this research. Battle Creek, Michigan is a community of approximately 51,000 people. According to QuickFacts of the United States Census Bureau, the demographic makeup of the community using the 2014-2018 data is 70.5% White alone, 18.5% Black or African American alone, 3.3% Asian alone, 7.1% Hispanic or Latino and 5.8% two or more races⁴. In Battle Creek, 22% of people live in poverty and according to ALICE Data (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) 40 percent of the residents in Calhoun and Kalamazoo counties are barely getting by. When disaggregated by race the poverty data shows the disparities in Battle Creek with only 15% of the White population in poverty on the low end compared to nearly 40% of the Black population on the high end.

Measuring the health and well-being of the youngest population within a community is a good indicator of the overall health of the community. In 2010 a population-based measurement of kindergarten preparedness and early development, the Early Development Instrument (EDI), was administered in the Battle Creek community showing that only 7% of children were showing up ready for kindergarten. That means that only 7% of children were scoring high on four or more of the indicators for readiness which include physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communications skills and general knowledge (TCC Report Card, p. 9). This stark data, in addition to the allocation of state resources to create the state funded preschool program for four-year-old children in Michigan, the Great Start Readiness Program⁵ (GSRP), prompted many in the

⁴ The categories used here are those used in the American Community Survey.

⁵ The Great Start Readiness Program is Michigan's state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children in families who make up to 250% of the federal poverty level in terms of annual income. The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start. The funding is allocated to each intermediate

community to prioritize early childhood and take action. In this example, the networked approach has been critical to addressing this issue because analyzing this problem in the context of the community and across sectors is critical to developing comprehensive solutions to support school readiness and early development, which are multifaceted and require the efforts of different types of partners. Being ready for school is not only about early learning, it is also about social emotional well-being, physical health, parent support and socioeconomic security. For this reason, the solution to such a problem needs to incorporate the entire system.

Research Questions

One overarching question guides this study:

How do families enter into and experience different features, opportunities and organizations in a Formal Early Childhood System Network?

Addressing this question requires examination and a more nuanced understanding of the Formal Early Childhood System Network and the Informal Network of families as well as detailed accounts of how families are engaging in or experiencing the Formal Network and the organizations within. As a result, two sub-questions will guide how I approach answering the overarching question:

1. What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Formal Early Childhood System Network within the Battle Creek community?
2. What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Informal Networks of the families?

school district to administer to programs locally. Essentially this program provides full and half day preschool experiences for children during the school year. These programs are meant to help children develop socially, emotionally and academically and be better prepared to enter kindergarten. (www.michigan.gov/mde)

In the results sections and in the concluding chapter I will build on these questions by addressing how a deeper understanding of the make-up, structure and function of the Informal and Formal Networks creates the knowledge necessary to identify interventions that can be considered to more effectively serve children and families.

Study Design

This study is designed in such a way that the sub-questions are addressed first, to provide the context necessary to answer the overarching question: How do families enter into and experience different features, opportunities and organizations in a Formal Early Childhood System Network? The first research sub-question (What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Formal Early Childhood System Network within the Battle Creek community?) is designed to provide a better understanding of the early childhood system/network that exists in Battle Creek from the providers' perspective. This was done by analyzing information⁶ (websites, reports, meeting agendas and notes) and by drawing on a social network analysis of 78 organizations in the early childhood system that has been conducted in the community as the result of a collaborative planning process that included members of the Formal Early Childhood System Network, referenced above and explained in greater detail in chapters three and four. This data supports the construction of an understanding of the Formal Network.

To address the second research sub-question (What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Informal Networks of the families?) through purposeful sampling I identified 7 families with a child or children between the ages of 3-4 who live below 250% of poverty in

⁶ I am using only document collection/analysis and the social network analysis map to construct the overview of the early childhood system because as an employee of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation I have to be careful to avoid conflict of interest situations. Many of the providers in the early childhood system are grantees and it has been determined by our legal team that conducting interviews would present a conflict of interest.

Battle Creek and qualify for free public preschool or a childcare subsidy from the state. The sample of families is diverse with respect to race/ethnicity and with respect to relative socioeconomic status. Given the qualifications to receive public funding for preschool, all families are low income. Over the course of nine months I conducted three detailed interviews to develop egocentric network maps that show the networks of people and organizations each family relies on to meet their personalized needs and desires for early childhood opportunities. I am referring to the ego network of each individual family as their Informal Network. An ego network (egocentric network) is a personal network that looks at the ties between the ego, in this case the family or mother, and the alters, or other people/organizations in their network (Robins, 2015).

Finally, with all of the rich and nuanced data gathered from the two research sub-questions, I developed individual case studies of each family that tells the story of their experience with the Formal Early Childhood System Network. This data provides a detailed account of examples of family experiences with the Formal Network and the organizations within, as well as the ideas from those interviewed to improve the system/networks and their experiences. I first compared the Formal Network with each individual Informal Network created to explore how families are entering into the Formal Early Childhood System network and then I compared those experiences across families using comparative case study methodology to look for patterns across.

Through the approach of combining the social network data with the qualitative case study data of the families, I have been able to construct an understanding of the network/system, that is nuanced enough that some key intervention points are identified, ultimately fulfilling the intended purpose of the study.

Chapter II – Review of the Literature and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This literature review was a journey that evolved throughout the course of the study conceptualization, design, research and the writing of this dissertation. What follows is not a comprehensive overview in one particular field, but a review of relevant literature across fields that when interpreted and analyzed in its totality, has provided a solid foundation upon which to conceptualize, design and carryout my research. According to Ravitch and Riggan (2017), there is a wide range of responses, often contradictory, from university-based scholars and researchers as to what constitutes a literature review. The debate focuses on relevance versus thoroughness, “...expectations of some faculty that a literature review must be thorough and comprehensive versus the view of others that it should be a selective and focused review of the literature within and across specified fields,” (p. 29). Ravitch and Riggan (2017) argue for the latter and also argue that the review of literature is not just a specific section within the dissertation titled “literature review” but that the literature should inform the statement of the problem, the conceptual/theoretical framework and the methodology. This is the approach I have taken.

In search of examples, definitions and methodology that would help to explain and question my on the ground experience, I have done a broad scan of literature in a variety of relevant areas. I began by searching for literature on *intermediary organizations* because the system I was observing was structured in such a way that two intermediary organizations were responsible for the coordination across organizations and between the organizations and families that made up the early childhood system. I needed to learn from examples of how intermediary

organizations are structured, what their purpose is, who they benefit and how they have been studied. Next, I turned to literature on systems designed to support the whole child in the context of their family and community. This led me to dig deeper into the *systems of care* concept and examples of how these systems functioned, who they served and the opportunities for further study. The literature on systems of care showed that there is a gap in understanding of how the formal system interacts with the informal system or network of the family. The next step on my journey was to gain a better understanding of *family networks*, specifically how they are structured, who they consist of and how they help families gain access to support and opportunities. Finally, I look at the literature on *social networks* and *social network analysis*, which includes detail on how such networks are analyzed and structured, including the impact of network and social capital. Throughout the review I have incorporated relevant literature examining the impact of race, gender and class on the structure of systems/institutions/networks and how that impacts the access families have to opportunities.

Intermediary Organizations

There is a breakdown that happens in communities when nonprofit organizations work in isolation. Complex social problems cannot be addressed by one or even two or three organizations working in isolation (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Systems of Care, 2010; Foster-Fishman et al. 2007). It takes coordinated efforts within a community to address challenges and remove barriers children and families face to experiencing positive developmental and educational outcomes. Therefore, an intermediary organization is often a nonprofit organization whose mission/goals are to build connections in communities focused on children, families and education institutions including mediating between nonprofit organizations, for profit organizations, government, formal educational institutions and the individual or collective

relationships with children and families.

Underlying the need for intermediary organizations in today's society is the decrease of social capital in communities (Berger, 1976; Carlson, 1999; Novak, 2001; Putnam, 2001). This loss of social capital is both at the systems level and the individual level. For example, modernization has brought about the dichotomization of social life between the huge and powerful institutions of the public sphere and the private life of individuals. Community social capital and personal social capital can be important for families as they are seeking to find the services and opportunities they desire for themselves and their children. Connection to these institutions and the ability to navigate the opportunities available can be based on social capital as well as the structural inequities inherent within such systems controlling who has access to this type of knowledge and who does not. Specifically related to the focus of early childhood and development in this study, child development is significantly shaped by social capital (Putman, 2000; Lareau, 2005; Hunter et al., 2018). According to Putnam (2000), there is a considerable body of research demonstrating that the social capital within a child's family, school, peer group and larger community have wide-ranging effects on a child's access to opportunities, which is directly connected to their development and other outcomes. As noted earlier, this access to opportunity is impacted by one's race, gender and class and the inequities that exist in society. Similarly, few studies on social capital have focused on African American families or families of color (Hunter et al., 2018). Several studies have found that while the networks and resources within African American families and communities are often undervalued and viewed with a deficit framing, the same concept of social capital and the positive benefits that accompany are present and powerful, such as an increase in trust and the

exchange of resources that then benefits the child's ability to access resources in various contexts (Hunter et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005).

This decrease in social capital cited above is presented as a possible social crisis if not resolved because big institutions are impersonal and cannot represent a collective conscious and therefore, intermediary institutions are necessary to mediate between people and these bureaucratic institutions to protect the collective interests of communities (Berger, 1976) and to rebuild social capital. These bureaucratic institutions historically and based on outcome data haven't successfully served or engaged families of color. Intermediaries can be helpful in building those bridges and supporting underserved communities in gaining access to opportunities.

Additionally, the erosion of social bonds between organizations and between people and organizations and the impact on families, neighborhoods, communities and institutions, has resulted in part from the rise in individualism. This erosion comes at a time when communities are changing and struggling with growing diversity, cultural change and institutional change. The need is greater than ever for collective action and broader community coalitions to address the problems communities face (Carlson, 1999; Noam, 2005; Kagan and Kaurez, 2012). As a result, within the last decade or so new types of intermediary organizations have emerged that not only connect with families, children and communities, but bring together disparate efforts within a community to align around impacting complex social issues such as effective delivery of early childhood services, reduction of teen pregnancy, mitigation of health disparities and increasing college and career success. Ultimately these intermediary organizations develop networks within communities to address particular social problems or to provide specific services. According to Mandell (2001) some governments are experimenting with developing equal partnerships

involving communities, nonprofits and the private sector – a type of collaboration called a network or network structure (a System of Care, addressed later in the review, is an example). While this is meant to help equalize power and technically no one is in charge, it doesn't mean that there isn't a lead agency/nonprofit organization or foundation setting up the formal rules of collaboration (Mandell, 2001). This "lead agency" is what I refer to in this study as an intermediary organization. I will illustrate through the review of literature that many terms are used to describe such an organization –Needle-Moving Community Collaboratives (Jolin et. al., 2012), Collective Impact/Backbone (Kania and Kramer, 2011), Mediating Institutions (Berger, 1976), Boundary Organizations (Lemos, 2014) but ultimately, they are all working toward the same end of coordinating people and organizations in a network to create social change.

"Needle-Moving Community Collaboratives," a term coined by The Bridgespan Group, presents a role for a different type of mediating or intermediary institution that serves more in a connecting role across communities to bring diverse sectors together to focus on a challenge a community is facing. In many or most cases, this does include families and institutions of education, but they are not the only stakeholders being brought together through these mediating activities. According to Jolin et al. (2012), these organizations or collaboratives are necessary because individual nonprofit services are fragmented or dispersed and therefore unable to achieve community-level change which is frustrating to impacted parties including taxpayers, funders, policymakers, providers and the beneficiaries.

Another approach similar to that of the Needle-Moving-Collaboratives is Collective Impact. The approach, coined by John Kania and Mark Kramer in a 2011 Stanford Social Innovation Review article, was developed to overcome the isolated approaches of many individual organizations doing similar but disconnected work, especially in the nonprofit sector.

Kania and Kramer refer to this concept as Isolated Impact in their groundbreaking article using the headline “Large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination” (p. 36). While that statement wasn’t groundbreaking or even new to many whose life’s work has focused on social change, it showed that it is not just one intervention, but a combination of interventions that add up to impact. According to Kania and Kramer’s (2011) Collective Impact model, there are five conditions of collective success which include the development of a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and a backbone support organization.

A specific example of an effort using the Collective Impact approach is Strive. Located in Cincinnati and northern Kentucky, Strive has focused on bringing together local leaders to increase the education achievement and success of every child from college to career. Part of why this effort was highlighted is because it exemplified that fixing just one point in the education continuum wasn’t enough to improve outcomes for children and families. To achieve real change it would require focusing on multiple parts of the continuum and bringing together a variety of different partners (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Strive serves as the intermediary backbone support organization in this Collective Impact effort that creates a network of organizations to better serve children and families. Additionally, several years after Strive was formed they added several new dimensions to begin to address issues of equity such as developing common language to ensure people have a shared understanding of what is meant by equity and using disaggregated student data to truly understand the disparities (Kania & Kramer, 2015). Gaining a deeper understanding of the disparities that exist and the history of those disparities is a critical component in creating social change. For example, Riley (2016) describes that call to action within public health research to stop simply documenting differences in health outcomes by race,

but to look with a lens toward the theory and history that drives the racialized health disparities so that the impact of structural racism on health outcomes can be better understood and greater progress can be made toward eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities.

As noted above, there is a growing body of research on the characteristics of intermediary organizations working across topic areas, but not intermediary organizations working directly with formal education institutions and families. According to Lopez (2005) there is substantial literature on the types of outcomes of family involvement in education, but little is known about the role of intermediary organizations in family involvement. Despite this gap in the literature, this review provides the opportunity to look at the commonalities and successes, as well as the differences of existing intermediary organizations and determine how they might be applied to organizations working to mediate between families, communities and early educational and developmental opportunities.

Across all sources reviewed regarding intermediary organizations, it can be concluded that they serve in a networking role, they coordinate collective efforts between at least two entities, and they provide support and technical assistance. (Breakthrough Performances, 2008; Delale-O'Connor and Walker, 2012; Honig, 2004; Jolin et al., 2012; Lopez, 2005; Shea, 2011). While intermediary organizations tend to have similar characteristics, they can be structured and positioned very differently depending on whether they are focusing locally, statewide or nationally. There are common challenges across all intermediaries such as sustainable funding, clearly defining their value and role among the partners they are created to serve and effectively measuring impact. Challenges unique to the local level include the limited number and capacity of providers, staff turnover and a challenge linking to larger political trends and policies. State level intermediaries struggle to scale up and have a policy impact across the state and struggle to

connect policy to practice or the “field” with the communities. And finally, intermediaries at the national level tend to have difficulty maintaining focus by not spreading themselves too thin and effectively spreading innovative ideas (Delale-O’Connor and Walker, 2012). To mitigate these challenges, Delale-O’Connor and Walker (2012) recommend that intermediaries should be clear on the evidence base of the programs they are helping providers implement; root practice in research-based methods; determine feasibility of scaling up; measure impact, strengthen and improve programs, increase access and likelihood of receiving and maintaining funding; reduce operational costs by streamlining programs; and identify successful operational strategies.

The literature also shows that the success of an intermediary organization is difficult to quantify because most often their role is to support the partners or the community as a whole to improve collaboration toward the achievement of larger goals so outcome measures are more likely to be found at the partner level or community level as opposed to at the intermediary level. The research shows that intermediaries have an important role to play in bringing partners together to set shared goals; however, the intermediary isn’t carrying out the activities and strategies that lead to the outcomes, they are coordinating the partners who are enacting these tasks (Breakthrough, 2008; Delale-O’Connor and Walker, 2012,). It is for this reason that intermediary organizations have a difficult time measuring impact (Delale-O’Connor and Walker, 2012). An approach to measuring success of such collaborative efforts is to focus on community wide goals or community impact (Jolin et al., 2012; Shea, 2011; Kania & Kramer, 2012; and Hanelybrown et al., 2012) However, again while this helps in measuring the success of the collaborative effort, and is a reflection on the success of the intermediary, it is not a direct measure of the success of the intermediary as an organization. According to Shea (2011), little is known about the actual impact of intermediary organizations, especially the ones supported by

the federal government. Additionally, according to Honig (2004), despite the growing number of intermediary organizations, little is known about them as research studies have included them more in the background than as the main focus of any research or evaluation (p. 65). The literature does propose some methods that could be used to measure the impact of the intermediary such as looking at core agency centrality through a network analysis (Shea, 2011); changes in behavior of the partner organizations (Breakthrough, 2008; Lopez, 2005); customer satisfaction (Delale-O'Connor and Walker, 2012); and impact on individuals (Kania & Kramer, 2012).

Intermediary organizations are often at center of networks or the systems they are helping to connect, align and coordinate. A relevant example of such a system is a system of care.

Systems of Care

A “system of care” refers to organizations and services that have been coordinated to address complex problems in children’s mental health. It was originally conceived and defined by Stroul and Freedman in 1986 in response to the crisis of fragmented services for children with serious emotional disturbances. In a special issue of *Evaluation and Program Planning* (2010) scholars trace the history of the system of care movement, discuss the definitions used in the field of children’s mental health and expand the definition so it is applicable to a variety of different types of systems ranging from education to juvenile justice to child welfare. Although the term systems of care originated in the metal health field, Hodges (2010) cites evidence of where it has been used across fields, “education (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001), child welfare (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Administration for Children and Families, 2003), and juvenile justice (Skowyr & Cocozza, 2006).” (p. 4). The definition of a system of care has evolved over the past 20 years

to have a greater involvement of families and an increased focus on cultural competence. It has also evolved with recent developments in the understanding of the complexity of systems and the rapidly shifting demographic, political and funding landscapes (Hodges 2010; Cook & Kilmer, 2010; Foster-Fishman et al. 2007).

As described in the introduction, the definition I am adopting for my research was developed by Cook and Kilmer (2010) “A *system* of care is an adaptive *network* of structures, processes and relationships embedded within the community and grounded in system-of-care values and principles⁷. A system of care provides youth and their families with the services and supports needed to *enable* them to live, work, learn and participate fully in their communities” (p. 20). The concept of systems of care is focused on developing or changing the landscape of how organizations work together in a system or network to better serve children and families. Foster-Fishman et al., (2007) refer to this as systems change and identify the “systems of care” effort as a movement that aimed to build a more coordinated service delivery system. Foster-Fishman et al. (2007) note that all too often these initiatives fail because the systems change efforts are intended to change systems; yet, many systems change efforts ignore the systemic nature of the contexts they target and the complexity of the change process. An example of such is a case study conducted by Mandell (2001) of the New Futures (NF) program in Dayton, Ohio funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This specific program was designed to impact systems including schools, health, human services agencies, criminal justice, and other important actors, to improve outcomes for young people. The initial goal was to prevent truancy. In this case Annie E. Casey gave the leadership role, or intermediary role to the School Superintendent

⁷ Principles and values include Interagency Collaboration; Individualized and Strengths-Based Care; Cultural and Linguistic Competence; Child, Youth, and Family Involvement; Community-Based Approaches; and Accountability (Systems of Care Cross Site Evaluation, 2010)

on behalf of the school systems. The city of Dayton included community members and youth in developing the vision. As the partners at the table expanded, there was a desire to expand the mission of the work (the targets) to include the welfare of children and families in the community as a whole. Unfortunately, in this case the lead organization/intermediary did not agree with this shift and it ultimately jeopardized the entire effort. The foundation did not renew the grant and the effort ended. The lessons learned according to Mandell (2001) were about the management structure of a network and that as the partners wished to shift the effort and the targets of the system, the hierarchical relationships between the school and foundation complicated this ability and in the future need to be tempered. This is an important lesson about what can happen when an organization appointed to lead, doesn't adapt as the needs and desires of partners shift.

There was debate in the literature regarding the definition of systems of care (Hodges et al., 2010; and Cook & Kilmer 2010) as to whether the formal definition used in the field should extend beyond the mental health field. My adopted definition clearly opens up the work beyond mental health and it also acknowledges the active role families play in their own lives stating that the services *enable* them to live, work, learn and participate fully. This is an important phrase in the definition and in my research. These informal supports are particularly relevant when seeking to redefine the types of social capital or supports that are valued in society. Yosso (2005) discusses “community cultural wealth” which helps to reframe what is valued and acknowledged, particularly in shifting to an asset-based recognition of the types of “wealth” in communities of color. Community cultural wealth appropriately recognizes the important role and value of the more informal systems such as family and personal networks. Among the benefits of better integrating the informal system of the family with the formal system of care are

that it helps to support access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services (Hodges et al., 2010) and it recognizes the assets and strengths of diverse communities which can support the creation of systems that promote social and racial justice (Yosso, 2005). Engaging and valuing the voices and perspectives of diverse populations in a meaningful way helps to challenge commonly held understandings of what is “normal” or is valued, which tends to be white dominate culture. Expanding the common understanding of what is valued helps a system to become more inclusive, responsive and accountable to the needs and desires across differences of race, ethnicity and gender. Yosso (2005) explains how this applies in an education setting when a student’s cultural knowledge is not seen as valuable in school and the negative impact that can have on their educational experience. The types of capital noted by Yosso (2005) that often go unacknowledged in communities of color include: aspirational or the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future; navigational or skills navigating through social institutions; social, defined as networks of people and community resources; linguistic or communication experiences in more than one language or style; familial or cultural knowledge nurtured among family/kin; and resistant which refers to knowledge and skills developed through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.

The Informal Networks of families often include family members, religious organizations and smaller nonprofits who are trusted by families and “create a front porch” (Callejas et al., 2010) meaning that community-based organizations who are often skilled at developing relationships with diverse families, can serve as a front porch or entry point into the larger system of services. Callejas et al. (2010) argues that these systems must increase compatibility between the system itself and the populations of focus in order for a system of care to better serve diverse children and their families in a culturally competent manner. Ishimaru et al.,

(2016), refers to the people in these front porch types of roles as cultural brokers, or the person that supports a family in gaining access to new opportunities. While some forms of cultural brokering seek to socialize nondominant families into school-centric norms, the approach to cultural brokering focused on equitable collaboration, and the type I am referring to, creates more reciprocal relationships and forms of support leading to a welcoming climate for families, building relationships between parents and situating the engagement in community taking into account the broader context of community building (Ishimaru et al., 2016).

In a 2003 study Hodges et al. set out to better understand participant experiences with collaboration in systems of care. The purpose of the study was to identify promising practices in collaboration among child-serving agencies participating in the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Nine sites were the focus of the study and families, service providers, administrators and community members participated in semi-structured interviews. The results of this study showed that while a well-developed system of professional network is necessary, the development of family participation and inclusion is just as necessary to achieve the goals of the collaboration. This supports the notion that it is truly the overlap between the formal system and the informal system or family system that drives the best outcomes. Furthering this point, Ishimaru et al., (2016) shares that families are key partners for not only improving their own child's outcomes, but that their collaboration can create greater equity in educational systems. Her study used comparative case study methodology to look at how individuals and cultural brokers within three sites operating under a "collective impact" model incorporating education as well as community partners. These three sites were working to double the number of students in the region obtaining a college degree or credential and they had identified improving parent

engagement as a key component in the process. Ishimaru et al. argued that a, “framework of equitable collaboration in tandem with an organizational lens to examine how intermediaries can interact with nondominant parents to provide institutional knowledge, power, and resources for them...and work with parents to directly access and change the systems and power asymmetries that exacerbate educational and societal inequities” (p. 856).

In another example, a 5-year cross-site evaluation explored the role of family involvement in the implementation of the *Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care* demonstration initiative in nine grant sites representing 18 communities (Systems of Care Cross Site Evaluation, 2010). The initiative was focused on infrastructure development to strengthen the capacity of human service agencies to support families involved in public child welfare through a set of six guiding principles: interagency collaboration; individualized, strengths-based care; cultural and linguistic competence; child, youth, and family involvement; community-based approaches; and accountability. The evaluation examined grant activities related to strategic planning, collaborative partnerships, policies, procedures, and practices, the corresponding impact such work had on systems and organizational change at the collaborative and agency levels, improvements in child welfare practices and services, and outcomes for children and families. A variety of data gathering approaches were used including: interviews with Systems of Care project directors, local evaluators, and child welfare and partner agency staff; focus groups with direct service workers from child welfare and partner agencies; surveys of collaborative member and child welfare agency direct service workers; and case file reviews of randomly selected child welfare case files from Systems of Care.

This evaluation revealed significant benefits of family involvement. Some of the types of involvement included family and youth participation in case planning conferences, membership

of families on collaborative governance bodies, family participation in the design of the agency policies and procedures and parents as co-trainers. The most relevant finding in this study is that peer-to-peer mentoring of families was found to be beneficial supporting the notion that helping the families develop informal networks lead to improved experiences and outcomes.

Relevant lessons learned from the evaluation regarding family involvement include: while challenging and time consuming, establishing family involvement at the case, peer, and systems levels can bring transformation within child welfare and partner agencies. Promoting meaningful family involvement at all levels of the child welfare agency requires attention to necessary policy changes, training for child welfare agency staff and family members, requirements for peer mentor positions, clear definitions and procedures for family teaming, supervision and feedback loops.

To break down the definition of system of care further, the term network, "...is intended to capture the idea that the system is made up of an integrated web of structures, processes and relationships. System linkage across people, organizations, and communities is believed to support the capacity of the system to provide an individualized and non-linear response to the needs of children and families. The qualities of linkage and integration can be contrasted with the fragmentation and disconnectedness across people, agencies, and communities that would exist in the absence of a network within a system of care" (Hodges et al., 2010, p. 8). Several studies looking at systems of care used social network analysis as a method to look more closely at the structure and functioning of these networks (Friedman, 2007; Nageswaran, 2012; Davis et al., 2012).

All of these studies found that the more closely the organizations were networked over time the better the impacts for children and families. Friedman (2007) evaluated the interagency

collaboration in a network of child-serving providers as part of the evaluation of the Bridgeport (Connecticut) Safe Start Initiative (BSSI). Researchers examined the network data looking for separate clusters of organizations and isolates, or organizations with no connections to others, to determine the impact of entry points for families getting the services they needed to being referred to other services. Their findings revealed that there were no dead ends or groups that were isolated from others. They found that despite increases in density and closeness of the network over time, some agencies were better access or entry points than others. One way they looked at the effectiveness of entry points was the number of direct connections each entry point/agency had to others in the network, or degree centrality. For example, this could be an organization such as a food pantry that is then connected to many other organizations within the network giving them a high degree of centrality or connectedness throughout the rest of the network. They also looked at betweenness, or the measure of how often a given agency is on the shortest path between two other agencies, or how often an organization is a “gatekeeper” for getting from one organization to another (Friedman, 2007). Ultimately the study found that over-time shifts in the system including, closer relationships within the network overall, more agencies with direct ties to at least three-quarters of other agencies in the network (including a full array of different agency types), and a more decentralized network allowed families to more easily access a variety of services from any entry point.

In my analysis, a limitation of Friedman (2007) is that while the study did incorporate a qualitative component so people in the organizations could add some description to the relationships, again families were not interviewed and their experiences were not taken into consideration which again begs the so what question - they may be coordinating better, but is this improving the experience and ultimately the outcomes for families. This was a limitation noted

by the researchers that more research is necessary between collaboration and client outcomes. Additionally, they advocate for the combination of combining network data with qualitative data.

The need to gain family perspectives on the collaborations between organizations was a limitation also noted in Nageswaran et al. (2012). They used social network analysis methods to describe the gaps in a network designed to serve children with complex chronic conditions. They surveyed representatives from 28 agencies in Forsyth County North Carolina. The findings revealed that there were many gaps in collaboration with the biggest gaps between clinical programs (or more formal organizations) and community programs and family support services (more informal programs), with family support programs experiencing the greatest gaps. The study also recommended that specific organizations serve as a hub (or intermediary) and collaborate with all other agencies in the network. In this particular study the recommended hub was a primary-care pediatric practice; however, hubs may vary across different types of organizations. A recommendation for further study included the need to gain the family perspective on the collaboration between agencies to help identify additional gaps in the system.

Family Networks

It is the intersection between the Formal System/Network and the Informal Network and engagement with families where opportunities lie to improve experiences and outcomes for children and families within systems of care (Cook, 2010; Cochran, 1979). This literature shows important differences in the structure of the network and access to resources and outcomes for children (Cochran et al., 1979) based on the gender, class, race (Lin, 2000; Kana'Iaupuni et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005; Powell and Grant-Thomas, 2006) and childrearing (Bost, 2002) of the person at the center of the network and of the people within the network (Wellman and Wortley, 1990; McPherson, 2001). The literature also revealed a need for further study of the intersection

between the Informal Networks of parents and the Formal Systems and institutions in society (Cook 2010; Cochran, 1979). “Social networks can serve as bridges between the family and the major institutions of society, and we need to know whether construction of those bridges must necessarily be dependent upon the energies of individual families, or whether there are ways that schools, hospitals, day-care centers, churches, and corporations could contribute to the development of informal structures which facilitate the role of the parent and the development of the child” (Cochran, 1979, p. 614/5).

Networks inherently provide access to human and social capital which play an important role in the life chances and opportunities for individuals and the well-being of communities. Inequality in different types of capital, including social capital, contributes to social inequality and social capital is impacted by where people are located in a network and the network characteristics (Lin, 2000). Regarding network location there is a tendency for those in disadvantaged socioeconomic positions to cluster together. Additionally, people of similar race, gender and religion tend to form networks together, known as homophily (Lin, 2000; McPherson, 2002). Homophily is the concept that networks are homogenous with regard to many sociodemographic, behavioral, and intrapersonal characteristics and this can be limiting to people’s social worlds and also have implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience (McPherson, 2001; Lin 2000). According to Lin, (2000), “Social groups (gender, race) have different access to social capital because of their advantaged or disadvantaged structural positions and associated social networks. Situated in different positions in the social hierarchy, and given the tendency to interact with other members of the same social group (homophily), members of a disadvantaged group may find themselves deficient in social capital” (pg. 793).

I would argue that the structural constraints Lin (2000) refers to are largely driven by a history of structural racism in this country, which the author did not specifically mention. According to (Grant-Thomas & powell, 2006), the term structural racism is not well understood and as a result inhibits the success of approaches to achieve equitable outcomes. Often Americans take the individual people to be the main vehicles of racism and fail to recognize the impact of inequitable institutions or structural racism and historical and current segregation on achieving racial equity. The definition of structural racism used in (Grant-Thomas & powell, 2006), emphasizes the powerful impact of inter-institutional dynamics, institutions resource inequities and historical legacies of racial inequities today. Importantly they note that interpersonal racial bias in areas ranging from housing to healthcare still remain a powerful contributor to racial inequality and while racist individuals need to be monitored and possibly reformed, they urge that rehabilitating our key social, political and cultural institutions is even more critical to the achievement of racial justice. “By adding a structural lens to previous individual and institutional analysis of racism, we arrive at a more accurate diagnostic tool for the social ills that develop along racial lines” (powell, 2008). They also note though, that a thorough examination of racial disparity will look at three levels, the individual, the intra-organizational and the inter-organizational. Looking at racism from a structural standpoint allows one to analyze how housing, education, employment and other systems interact to produce racialized outcomes (powell, 2019). This is a critical lens to use in understanding how Informal and Formal Networks are constructed and maintained and how some networks may allow for the flow of opportunities to families of color and low-income families while others may structurally limit opportunities. The racial bias that powell and Grant-Thomas (2006) refer to also impacts the value placed on one’s network and whether it is termed “deficient”. Some of this may be

driven by how one defines value of a relationship or tie and some of it may also be driven by the structural limitation of opportunities that may constrain the inclusion of such access within an Informal Network.

Class also has a significant impact on access to resources. Since often race, class and gender intersect many of the studies focus on at least two of those three variables. Often they are all related as demographic data often shows that women of color tend to be more likely to be living in poverty. This is driven by many societal and historical factors rooted in systemic racial inequities and gender disparities. These disparities are driven by biases that impact things ranging from the types of jobs women are offered to the amount they are paid, which differs based on race and gender (Godsil et al., 2016; Abad-Merino et al. 2018; Homan, 2019). For example, Godsil et al. (2016) explains the “Trap of traditional roles”. By traditional roles they are referring to the gender roles women have played in society including mothers, wives, and caregivers and the behavior expectations that go along with these role as being nurturing and selfless. These types of expectations and social norms, including additional characteristics of women as friendly and gentle, can limit their educational, career and social trajectories in important ways. “As a result, women and girls often hold themselves to stereotypes in ways that harm themselves and lead them to be implicitly biased against other women or girls. The nature of gender stereotypes is often different depending on race or ethnicity because these identity groups carry stereotypes of their own, which intersect with gender in unique ways” (p. 17). Stereotype threat is supported by decades of research and has confirmed that performance can be undermined by fears of confirming a negative stereotype of their identify group. Women and girls of color may face stereotype threat not only related to gender, but also to their race or both

depending on the situation (Godsil, 2016). This is directly related to economic well-being detailed below is this quote from Procter et al., 2016:

A majority (65%) of low-wage workers are women (National Women’s Law Center, 2014; United States Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2010)—and they are the overwhelming majority in positions that lack mobility, such as restaurant servers, cashiers, home health aides, and childcare workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015)...The inequity is further exacerbated by race and ethnicity: white women earn 86 cents to the dollar, Asian American women earn 84 cents, black women earn 60 cents, and Latina women earn 55 cents (Godsil et al., 2016, p. 19).

This dynamic is reflected in how our society is currently structured to support women and children, especially women and children of color. Through subtle forms of bias and discrimination, in combination with structural racism and sexism, the social services that are made available to women are delivered in a way that institutionalizes women’s chronic dependency and social disadvantage and maintains the status quo that keeps women in restricted roles socially and economically. This is compounded when the responsibility of caring for children falls primarily to women, especially single mothers who are faced with making less ambitious career choices, or no career choices at all, because we have a system in place that does not respect or support the dual responsibilities of women as mothers and women as workers/professionals.

An example of such disparities is evident in a study of the networks of 200 randomly selected families from 10 villages across Mexico, Kana'iaupuni et al. (2005) found that poorer mothers received significantly less support than others. The average network size for women in the sample was nine individuals – three immediate and six extended kin. Extended kin are

important for financial resources for economically marginalized households and financial support from networks is important for child health in economically marginalized households. Key findings suggest that networks containing more extended kin and coresident ties offer greater support resources to mothers with young children, especially among the poorest households. Additionally, both support and network size positively influenced health. More children had good health when their mothers reported larger than average networks compared to smaller than average networks. Specific dimensions of social networks were studied including network size, kinship roles, interaction (proximity, contact, and coresidence), and provision of financial and emotional support.

In another study that focused on parent networks and differences in class, Horvart et al. (2003) looked at the impact this had on how parents confronted problematic school situations. Interviews were conducted with 88 third and fourth grade children and their families who were part of a larger study that also focused on comparing parent's relationship with schools as well as other institutions including health care, and organized leisure activities such as sports, Boy Scouts, etc. Parental networks, which Horvart et al., claim are a "central dimension of social capital" are often studied quantitatively. They argue that ethnography is a nice compliment because it contributes to understanding of the underlying actions that produce or expend social capital. The researchers found significant difference in the networks of families across class, but not race noting however that Black middle-class families tried to ensure racial balance in their children's activities such as trying to ensure that their child was not the only Black child. The researchers also noted Black parents shared concerns about racial discrimination. The children's' activities, which play a large role in developing the networks, and the general make-up of the networks is otherwise very similar across race, according to Horvart et al. Middle class

families often have networks consisting of more professionals of various sorts and they leverage their networks and the resources provided to solve problems related to school while poor and working-class parents tend to have networks made up primarily of family. A significant and relevant example of the consequences of these differences was in how families navigated services for their children related to any special education needs whether it be a learning disability or a gifted program. Middle class parents leveraged their networks to advocate for the relevant testing, etc. while working-class and poor families rarely used their network ties to intervene to dispute assessments. The researchers did make the necessary and important point that while poor and working-class parent networks don't seem impactful in the educational issues aforementioned, they are not irrelevant. The strong relationships and proximity with family members enable parents other resources such as transportation to work, help with childcare and leisure time spent together.

While personal characteristics play a major role in shaping a person's network, the characteristics of those within one's network also plays a role in the type of social support that is accessible. Wellman and Wortly (1990) gathered data from interviews conducted in 1977-78 with a subsample of 29 of the 845 randomly sampled respondents in the first East York study (Wellman 1979). The types of ties they explored included the strength of the relationships, the access people have to one another, the structure, kinship, positional resources meaning the resources possessed by network members, and similarity and dissimilarity between the person and the tie. The study found that the ties people have with friends and relatives are the primary ways in which they get supportive resources. They also found that different types of ties provide different types of support based more on characteristics of the tie rather than characteristics of the members themselves. The results showed that strong ties provided emotional aid, small

services – which include things such as lending household items, minor household services, aid in dealing with organizations and companionship. Additionally, parents and children exchange financial aid, emotional aid, large service – which includes things such as home repairs, child care, long term health care, and small services. Physically accessible ties provide services, women provide emotional aid, and friends, neighbors and siblings make up about half of all supportive relationships.

Social Networks and Social Network Analysis

The family networks explored above are a type of social network, which is an important concept overall in this study. A *social network* is a set of relationships where resources are exchanged between members (actors or nodes) (Kadushin, 2012; Wellman and Frank 2000; Valente, 2015). A network consists of at least two actors or nodes that are connected through a tie or relationship which could be one way or multidirectional (Kadushin, 2012). Networks can be measured in terms of density of ties or the portion of possible ties between pairs of actors or nodes; reciprocity when one actor A provides a resource to actor B, actor B reciprocates with a resource to actor A; and transitivity or (A to B, B to C, A to C) (Kadushin, 2012; Frank et al., 2000).

How a network is structured impacts how resources flow (Wellman and Frank, 2000, Frank et al. 1998, Cross 2010). For example, in a study of the distribution of knowledge or “know-how” in a school setting Frank et al. (2015) found that the diffusion of the know-how was directly dependent on the structure of the network - specifically, clusters within the network. This study looked at the flow of knowledge among subgroups or clusters of people within a school setting and the impact that had on organizational change. Researchers constructed measures of density and clustering for the closest colleague network data used to define the

subgroups as well as for the network question specific to help provided with the initiative and used KliqueFinder⁸ network clustering algorithm to identify clustering.

Ultimately this study concluded that the more restricted the knowledge flows from potential provider subgroups, the greater the organizational change. In another study Frank and Yasumoto (1998) found that the subgroups or clusters among the French financial elite impacted their interactions. They found reciprocity is more likely to happen among loose ties and trust happens among more closely-knit groups. Outside of subgroups, where it is more difficult to enforce trust, actors rely on reciprocity.

A type of network structure relevant to this study is the core and periphery (Kadushin, 2012; Valente, 2012) where there is a cluster of organizations with dense connections at the core and a set of organizations on the periphery that are connected to the core but not to each other. For example, hundreds of organizations are often connected in community coalitions but the core group may consist of not more than 20 organizations. Bridging nodes, or potentially “front porch” types of organizations are important to increase network cohesion as they make connections between people who otherwise might not be connected such as people on the margins (Valente, 2012).

Network cohesion can also be strengthened through boundary organizations. In social network literature, the “intermediary organization” has been referred to as the boundary organization (Lemos et al., 2014). According to Lemos et al., (2014) boundary organizations have three characteristics: “(1) they involve information producers, users, and mediators; 2) they create and sustain a legitimate space for interaction and stimulate the creation of products and

⁸ KliqueFinder is a clustering algorithm that identifies non-overlapping subgroups in social network data and is a technique for producing a crystalized sociogram that maps the ties within and between cohesive subgroups (Frank, 2005).

strategies that encourage dialogue and engagement between scientists and decision makers; and 3) they reside between the worlds of producer and user with lines of accountability to each” (p. 275). No matter the structure of the network, all of these connections and the information shared between people and organizations is what makes up network capital, a form of social capital.

Social Capital

The first systematic contemporary analysis of social capital was produced by Pierre Bourdieu, who defined the concept as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu 1985, p. 248; 1980). The amount of social capital possessed by a given person depends on the size of their network and connections he/she can mobilize (Bourdieu, 1986). Lareau (2005) cites Bourdieu in her longitudinal study regarding how social class, with attention paid to racial differences, impacts child-rearing strategies and ultimately unequal access to resources through differential abilities to navigate societal and institutional systems. Lareau cites Bourdieu’s argument that individuals from different social locations are socialized differently and her study showed that this has a significant impact on how children are able to access opportunities throughout their lives. This difference in socialization gives some children more access to the “rules of the game” or the formal and informal knowledge about how institutions work (Lareau, 2005). Her research included in-depth interviews with 88 families and intensive ethnographic research with a subset of 12 families. She concluded, “ middle-class families, both white and black, were much more in sync with the standards of dominant institutions than were the childrearing strategies of working-class and poor families”. According to Lareau (2005) despite the advantages of working-class and poor family life, including having more respectful children, greater autonomy for children when they

engaged in leisure activities, and closer extended family life, the childrearing strategies of working-class and poor families generally did not comply with the expectations of educators, “Following Bourdieu (1977, 1984), I suggested that the key issue was not the intrinsic nature of the parenting itself, but rather the uneven rewards dominant institutions bestowed on different types of strategies” (pg. 1). According to Lareau, the research showed that upwardly mobile adults often had “culture guides” who helped decode institutional rules of the game, gave advice, and intervened at critical moments. This again highlights the need for that cultural broker, whether it be a key family member, professional, or trusted institution that is supporting families, low income and of color specifically, to break through these barriers.

Additionally, it is believed that when a community as a whole possess social capital, or the ability to work collectively, the community is more successful at attempts to address complex social problems (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Putnam 2001; Mandell 2001). According to Coleman (1988) social capital is defined by its function. “It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors-whether persons or corporate actors-within the structure” (pg. 98). It is also the attention to the powerful impact of these inter-organizational dynamics that can disrupt or maintain structural inequities that constrain access to opportunity (powell, 2019). Coleman (1988) ties social capital to action that becomes available through changes in relations among persons. It allows resources to be combined with other resources to bring about change at the system level and create different outcomes for individuals.

Certain types of social structures are important in facilitating social capital. As Lareau (2005) referenced, social capital in the family matters to a child’s education. Social capital in an immediate family can be measured by the relations between the children and parents and other

members included in the family. Social capital within the family that gives the child access to the adult's human capital depends both on the physical presence of adults in the family and on the attention given by the adults to the child. In a study and analysis of data on high school dropouts that looked at the impact of social capital, it was found that social capital was a resource for education that prevented dropping out. Social capital outside of the family also matters to a child's education and development and can include social capital within the community and that exist among parents.

Critique of Social Capital

Portes (1998) argues that the term social capital is losing its distinct meaning because it is being applied to so many different events and contexts; increasingly social capital has become a “cure-all for the maladies affecting society at home and abroad” (p. 2). Portes also notes social capital isn't always positive, as it is commonly discussed. Social capital, “...cuts both ways. Social ties can bring about greater control over wayward behavior and provide privileged access to resources; they can also restrict individual freedoms and bar outsiders from gaining access to the same resources through particularistic preferences” (pg. 21). These “particularistic preferences” could be driven by bias based on class, race and gender among other factors. As noted above, unless more explicitly defined, advocating for an increase in social capital within a community could actually lead to a decrease in access to *opportunity* for some if the social capital built is only reinforcing the inequities that exist as a result of structural racism (powell, 2019), or the lack of value placed on the contributions of diverse people and communities (Yosso, 2005; Godsil, et. al, 2016; Abad-Merino, et. al. 2018; Homan, 2019). Portes argues there is little ground to believe that social capital will solve the complex social problems that some of its proponents claim is possible. Other challenges involving social capital include a lack

of transparency and uncertainty regarding the reciprocity of the relationships within one's network – when or if people will reciprocate on what time horizon is often unknown.

Wellman and Frank (2000), offer a more circumscribed version of social capital – network capital that I am using for this study because it addresses some of these concerns, especially when combined with the concept of network capital increasing access to opportunity.

Network Capital

According to Wellman and Frank (2000) when people need help they can “either buy it, trade for it, steal it, get it from governments and charities, or obtain it through their ‘personal community networks’ – supportive ties with friends, relatives, neighbors and workmates” (p. 1). Wellman and Frank refer to this type of support as *network capital*, which is the form of social capital that makes resources, or access to opportunity, available through interpersonal ties. Network capital, or the who gives what to whom is dependent on the giver and the receiver, the relationship, as well as the composition and structure of the network (Wellman and Frank, 2000). This type of specificity about what is entailed in network capital, encourages an examination of not only the people within the network and their relationships, but the features of that network and the composition that make it more or less supportive of people with different characteristics, including race and gender. As detailed below, Wellman and Frank exemplify the analysis that can then be done taking into account the individual level, the interpersonal level and network level, which aligns well with the multi-level approach powell (2008) suggests in better understanding social ills that develop along racial lines, and I would add along lines of gender and class.

Wellman and Frank (2000) used data from a survey sample of 845 adults and a multi-level approach that integrates analysis levels into a comprehensive analysis of the individual, tie

and network. “Not only do people need – and want – to know which kinds of people (an individual-level analysis) and relationships (a tie-level analysis) are apt to provide different kinds of support, they also need and want to know the extent to which their social networks as a whole can support them (a network-level analysis)” (Frank & Wellman, 2000, p. 4). The findings suggest that the characteristics of the focal person(s) (egos), their connections or relationships (ties) and the people or organizations with whom they interact (alters)⁹ clearly affect the extent of support, as well as network composition, structure and the cross-level effects of composition and tie/alter (relationship/interaction) characteristics. “These are network capital in a deeper sense: It is the nature of the network that facilitates capitalization on potentially supportive ties” (p. 16). This study had the following relevant findings regarding network capital: when two people are connected to a common person, that person is more likely to provide support; when certain types of ties such as parents/child ties operate in a network heavily composed of such ties the support is greater; and the concept of reciprocity that an ego is more likely to receive support reciprocally from an alter whom this ego has supported. An important finding was also that people with higher need for support tend to have networks with more immediate kin.

According to Wellman and Frank (2000) social capital is a product of personal community networks as well as formally institutionalized groups. Families change ties over time based on their situations and their needs and Wellman and Frank (2000) conclude with the question “Is the network potentiation of supportive ties, so apparent for parent-child and accessible relationships, in part a result of people consciously constructing their networks to fit their needs?” (pg. 20). This question suggests that networks change and adapt overtime or to certain contexts or social influences.

⁹ An ego is the focal person in the network, the alters are the network partners or people the ego is connected to and the ties are the connections between the ego and alters (Robins, 2015)

Social Network Interventions

Networks can also change overtime through intentional intervention. Network interventions are efforts to use social networks or social network data to create change. The information can be used to create social influence, accelerate behavior change, improve performance or achieve desirable outcomes among individuals, community's, organizations or populations (Valente, 2012). There are many considerations when attempting network intervention. For example, "If we are attempting to intervene, does the social environment need to be changed or does the individual need to respond differently? If social factors count, then individualized interventions may fail; if individual effects matter than changing the social world alone may not have an impact," (Robins, 2015, pg. 41). Additionally, if a goal of the intervention is to reduce inequities which are often driven by racial, gender or socioeconomic disparities, it is necessary to take an even more nuanced look through the lens of equity. Again, powell (2019) recommends that there are three levels of interaction that should be analyzed: the individual, the intra-organizational and the inter-organizational. "By adding a structural lens to previous individual and institutional analysis of racism, we arrive at a more accurate diagnostic tool for the social ills that develop along racial lines" (powell, 2019). Looking at racism from a structural standpoint allows one to analyze how housing, education, employment and other systems interact to produce racialized outcomes (powell, 2019).

As noted above, the social network perspective is an appropriate and useful tool to monitor, influence and improve program implementation, especially when programs, policies, practices or principles are designed and scaled to different settings (Valente, 2015). Social network analysis helps in understanding human behavior and impact on behavior change as people interact with each other (Valente, 2015). While Valente (2015) focuses specifically on "evidence-based

practice,” with the three social processes important to program implementation including: partnerships between key stakeholders (policymakers, community, practitioners); intervention agents including intermediaries; and the social context (Valente, 2015, p. 18). For programs to be most effective during implementation it is important that they are delivered by people from the community that will be receiving the intervention or program because they most likely have trust and social capital among community members. Additionally, who delivers the program and the social context in which it is delivered matters. Personal social networks, or ego networks, are important and may impact the effect of the intervention. Valente (2015) cited a study that demonstrated children with friends who are physically inactive gained more from an obesity prevention program than those with physically active friends.

Social networks exploration of these members self-interests and relationships are useful data to access social capital that is available to be mobilized. Social networks are an important characteristic of community coalitions (Valente, 2015). It can be difficult to measure the impact of a coalition, however, social network analysis and looking at the timing and degree of information exchange between the intervention agent and the benefits of the program (attendance at meetings, homework completion) could be used as a measure to predict improved outcomes (Valente, 2015). Ultimately, social network intervention holds much promise when looking at how the Formal Network is interacting with the Informal Networks of families, and how those interactions could change to create more equitable access and opportunities for families and children.

Conceptual Framework

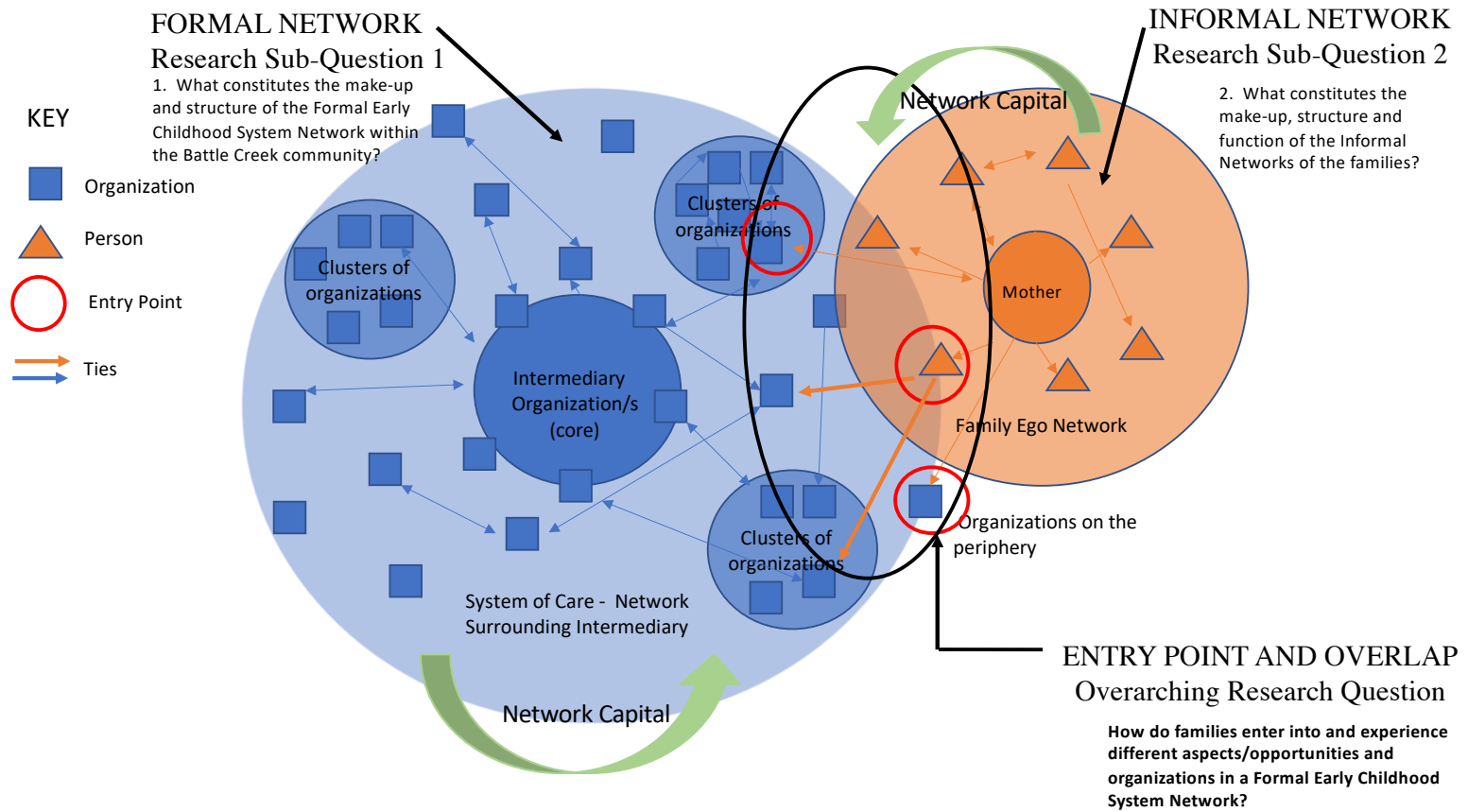
In this closing section, I present a conceptual framework that shows how I am connecting the key concepts in my study and the research questions. Included in the written description that

follows Figure 1, I will explain how this conceptualization is an outgrowth of the literature review. Again, I am following the definition and guidance of Ravitch and Riggan (2017) in the development of my conceptual framework. They define conceptual framework as an, “argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous” (p. 5). By appropriate and rigorous Ravitch and Riggan (2017) mean, “(a) the research questions are an outgrowth of the argument for relevance; (b) the research design maps onto the study goals, questions, and context(s); (c) the data to be collected provide the researcher the raw material needed to explore the research questions; and (d) the analytic approach allows the researcher(s) to effectively address (if not always answer) those questions” (p. 5).

In Figure 1, the Formal Network/Early Childhood System Network is represented by the light blue circle. The organizations within the network are represented by darker blue squares. Within the large blue circle are smaller dark blue circles that represent the intermediary organization(s) and potential clusters of organizations within the larger network that may be more connected to each other. The blue arrows represent the ties or relationships identified between the organizations within the Formal Network and the green arrow represents the network capital that results from these ties, relationships and exchange of information and resources. The light orange circle represents the Informal Network or the family ego network. The mother, the focal point in each individual network, is represented by the darker orange circle at the center and the individuals with whom she has relationships are represented by the orange triangles. The orange arrows represent the ties or relationships identified between the individuals within the Informal Network and the green arrow represents the network capital that results. The entry points are represented by the red circles that show where an orange arrows connects to the

blue squares signifying the relationships the family has with the Formal System that may serve as their entry point into the system of care. The overlap is also represented by the black oval showing how all of those entry points are creating alignment between the two networks.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Visual



Formal Network – Research Sub-Question 1

What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Formal Early Childhood System Network within the Battle Creek community?

The Formal Network (represented by the light blue circle) is addressed through research sub-question 1. This question explores key concepts from the literature such as the make-up of the Formal Network, including the organizations in the network (the dark blue squares), the characteristics of those organizations (Wellman and Wortly, 1990; Frank, 2000) and whether/how those characteristics impact the flow of resources exchanged through the ties and relationships between the organizations, or the network capital (Kadushin, 2012; Wellman and Frank 2000; Valente, 2015). Also impacting the flow of resources and network capital is how the network is structured and whether there is a core/periphery model - a cluster of organizations that make up the core and organizations outside the core on the margins (Kadushin, 2012; Valente, 2012). My conceptualization of how the Formal Network operates includes the role of an intermediary organizations (s) that is aligning efforts across organizations and people (Breakthrough Performances, 2008; Delale-O'Connor and Walker, 2012; Honig, 2004; Jolin et al., 2012; Lopez, 2005; Shea, 2011). The literature points to the importance of intermediary organizations bringing people together to address complex social problems (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Systems of Care, 2010; Foster-Fishman et al. 2007, Jolin, et a., 2012) and I explore to what extent this is happening in Battle Creek to coordinate the system of care, or Formal Network. Getting at the function of the network, according to the literature, networks are helpful in addressing complex social problem(s) so as a result I explored what the early childhood network in Battle Creek is designed to address, including whether the problem identification in this case shows evidence of an understanding of the structural inequities within the system and

whether there are methods/strategies in place to try to address those inequities (powell and Grant-Thomas, 2006; Homan, 2018). Once this deep understanding of the Formal Network is constructed, I moved to the Informal Network.

Informal Network – Research Sub-Question 2

What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Informal Networks of the families?

The Informal Network, or the family ego network, is addressed through research sub-question 2 that looks at how that person is interacting with those individuals. The first aspect of question two looks at what individuals are in a person's network and how the characteristics of those within the network shape the access one has to opportunities (characteristics include race, gender, class, profession, relationship/family/friend) (Wellman and Wortly, 1990; Wellman and Frank, 2000; Lin, 2000; Kana'iaupuni et al., 2005). I looked for evidence of homophily in the family networks and the impact that had (Lin, 2000; McPherson, 2002). Again, composition and structure impact the access one has to resources or network capital within a network and how those resources flow (Kadushin, 2012; Wellman and Frank, 2000; Frank et al. 2015; Cross 2010). Examining the function of the network includes questions such as: What are the mothers finding valuable about their own Informal Networks (community cultural wealth)? (Hunter et al. 2018,; Yosso, 2005); How do families get their information?; Are these women sharing any information with others and with whom?; How are the women feeling supported, where are they not feeling supported and who do they seem to go to most for support?; and Is there evidence of families helping other families or peer-to-peer mentoring or interactions? (Systems of Care Cross Site Evaluation, 2010). To tell the story of the social context behind these networks, narratives were documented from the mothers regarding the experiences they had seeking early childhood opportunities for their children; the desires they have for their children; and the types of jobs and

employment opportunities they had to sustain their families. This rich description of the women in the study and their Networks, in addition to the deep understanding of the Formal Network help to create the context to answer the overarching research question.

Entry Points and Overlap – Overarching Question

How do families enter into and experience different features, opportunities and organizations in a Formal Early Childhood System Network?

The entry points and overlap between the Informal Network and the Formal Network represents the heart of this study getting at how the mothers in this study are gaining access into the Formal Network and resultantly experiencing the opportunities that are available to support their desires and needs for the health and well-being of their children. This research question presents the opportunity to explore an abundance of interaction points between the two networks including: How are families participating in the Formal System? (Ishimaru et al., 2016); Who are the “front porch” (Calleja et al. 2010), cultural brokers, (Ishimaru et al., 2016), cultural guides (Lareau, 2005) and what role do they play in helping families access opportunities?; Do some organizations appear to be better entry points than others? If so, why? (Friedman, 2007); How are families being referred from one organization to another and once they are referred are they actually gaining access to an opportunity, service or resource?; and Are there organizations showing up in more than one family network? The next main area of exploration this research question supports is how the families are actually experiencing the network including any gaps they might be facing, their perspective on how well the system is networked and whether there is evidence that a more networked system is leading to better experiences and outcomes for the family (Friedman, 2007; Nageswaran, 2012; Davis et al., 2012); what are the benefits of better integrating the Formal Network with the Informal Network? (Hodges et al., 2010); whether there

are organizations identified by the families that could play a more centralized role; and Do the women experience or discuss structural inequities and/or, do there seem to be patterns of lack of access that might point to structural inequities?

My hypothesis, based on my observations and the literature, is that individuals have or are part of networks, both Formal and Informal. These networks can help individuals gain access to organizations and institutions that have the resources and opportunities they need and want for their children. Ideally, if a family is able to gain access to quality resources and opportunities within organizations/institutions, the outcomes for their children and families will improve. Ultimately my goal is that through a better understanding of the *design* (characteristics, structure, flow of information) of the Formal Network of the Early Childhood System and the Informal Network of the family, gaps will be discovered in the design of the networks, new or undocumented patterns of key interactions might appear and innovative or strengthened ways of working will emerge allowing families to access more of the opportunities, resources and supports needed to achieve equitable outcomes. The learning regarding strengthened ways of working is addressed in the concluding chapter through ideas shared about possible network interventions, including how organizations identified as key entry points might be better leveraged to improve access to opportunities for families.

In the following chapter I will detail how each research question will be addressed through the study design and appropriate methodologies.

Chapter III - Research Design

This chapter will show how the research design maps onto the study goals, questions and context. It will detail how the data I have collected provides the material needed to explore the research questions, including how the analytical questions presented in the conceptual framework will be addressed. After a brief introduction to the overview of the context and methods, I detail how I have gone about answering each sub-research question with the ultimate goal of answering the overarching research question: How do families enter into and experience different features, opportunities and organizations in a Formal Early Childhood System Network?

Overview of Context and Methods

Battle Creek Early Childhood System Network

The Battle Creek Early Childhood System Network, or the Formal Network, is a focal point in this study. Consistent with the definition of an early childhood system shared in the introduction (Kagen and Kaurez, 2012), the Formal Network in Battle Creek includes early childhood programs, including Head Start, a federally funded program, and the Great Start Readiness, a state funded program; local K-12 schools; businesses; physical and mental health organizations such as the local hospital; workforce providers supporting parents; multipurpose organizations such as the YMCA and others. As part of the Great Start Readiness program funding, it is required that each community establish a collaborative body called the Great Start Collaborative (GSC), explained in greater detail later. The GSC is led by an organization that

serves as part of the intermediary playing the essential role of coordinating across the aforementioned organizations, who have been organized into content specific Action Teams, and between families, supporting the functioning of the social network.

Methods

Each of the three questions in this study are being addressed through a combination of qualitative comparative case-based research and social network analysis. The social network analysis provides a deeper understanding of the make-up and structure of both the Formal and Informal networks and the qualitative approach provides detail on the functions of both networks and the family experiences and perspectives.

The study of networks, or social network analysis, is a method to understand how information flows between those in the networks and how the networks are structured in ways that support or deter that flow. According to Kadushin (2012) social networks and social network research is all about, "...getting connected; networks as information maps; leaders and followers; and networks as conduits" (pg. 5). Social network analysis is an appropriate and possibly the best suited methodology to use to better understand how this Early Childhood System Network in Battle Creek is structured and functioning.

In this study I am looking at two different types of networks. The Formal Network is focused on the relationships and interactions of many organizations. The Informal Network is an ego network or a personal network that focuses on the relationships the ego or individual has with alters, or people and organizations. The ego(s) in this study are not fully aware of how the organizations within their Informal Network are interacting with each other, which is what makes the combination and cross-case comparison of the Informal and Formal network data so valuable – it helps to create a more complete picture of interaction from multiple perspectives.

The use of cross-case comparison is applied not just to the social network data, but to qualitative data that was gathered in a systematic way, as explained below.

The case study methodology and the comparative case-based approach I am using is guided by George and Bennett (2005) and Byrne and Ragin (2009). In their 2005 book, “Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences,” George and Bennett state that their book contributes to the methodological dialogue by, “focusing on the comparative advantages of case study methods and on these methods’ ability to contribute to the development of theories that can accommodate various forms of complex causality” (p. 5). There are four advantages of case methods that make them valuable in testing hypotheses and useful for theory development: “their potential for achieving high conceptual validity; their strong procedures for fostering new hypotheses; their value as a useful means to closely examine the hypothesized role of causal mechanisms in the context of individual cases; and their capacity for addressing causal complexity” (George and Bennet, 2005, p. 19). While many approaches to qualitative case study don’t seek to determine causality, this school of thought aligns more closely with the “scientific realist” which emphasizes that “causal mechanisms – independent stable factors that under certain conditions link causes to effects – are central to casual explanation” (George and Bennet, p. 8). Byrne and Ragin (2009) also argue that, “the central project of any science is the elucidation of cause that extends beyond the unique specific instance” (p. 1). They clarify this by explaining that generalizing is not the same as universalizing and that it is important to specify the limits of generalization. In this study as I will explain further below, I am tracing the chain of events of a how a women enters into a network and as a result of that entry, what access she gained to opportunities within the network.

George and Bennet (2005) also emphasized the benefit of cross-method collaboration, multi-method work and complimentary approaches, which is in alignment with how I have gone about this study. While the data I have didn't allow for me to fully implement all of the affordances/advantages of this approach, outlined below, this is the methodological lens through which I am viewing this work.

To engage in cross-cases analysis, I employed the technique of structured, focused comparison which provides the opportunity to address general questions that reflect the research objectives and that guide and standardize data collection allowing for systematic comparison of the cases. The method is also focused because it helps the researcher narrow in on certain aspects of the cases (George and Bennet, 2005). The comparative method is central to case-based understanding (Byrne and Ragin, 2009). Specifically, structured focused comparison is an example of a comparative case study methodology that supports the researcher to develop a systematic understanding of multiple cases. According to Byrne and Ragin (2009) "...multiple case studies founded on systematic comparison – are the foundations of useful theoretical descriptions of the social world" (p. 3). The affordance of systematic comparison of a range of cases allows one to establish distinctive characteristics of particular cases and to explore how those characteristics taken together are causal to the current condition of cases (Byrne and Ragin, 2009, p. 5).

Following, the specific methods used for each research question will be addressed accordingly.

Research Question One: What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Formal Early Childhood System Network within the Battle Creek community?

To answer this research question, I used two types of data – information sources

(documents, websites, etc.) that explain the nature and functioning of the identified intermediary and the relevant organizations in the network and a social network analysis that was constructed by partners in the Battle Creek Community (I will refer to this as The Formal Network). The combination of these two types of data sources has allowed me to describe the early childhood system/network that exists in Battle Creek, Michigan, specifically who the partners are, the nature of their work, how they share information or know how (Frank et al. 2015) and their geographic location.

Document Collection and Analysis

Documents were gathered about the Great Start Collaborative (GSC) and the Action Teams including the GSC comprehensive strategic plan to better understand the role they play as an intermediary. This data was analyzed with the goal of contributing to the understanding of how organizations are working together and what they are doing/accomplishing when they work together. Using structured focused, comparison (George & Bennett, 2005), I gathered and analyzed data about each organization in the social network analysis using the following categories: organizational mission, vision, staff composition, programs and services offered for children and families, address, hours of operation, data on outcomes and outreach strategies to engage parents. All of this data was gathered through secondary sources, primarily website searches, so not all data was available for every organization. Only the categories that had sufficient data across the majority of the organizations are reported in the results section.

Social Network Analysis Survey Design

In early 2017 the Data, Learning and Continuous Improvement Action Team of the Great Start Collaborative, further explained below, began to design a plan to conduct a social network analysis of the early childhood providers in the Battle Creek Community, with the goal of

learning more about how they were working together. Collaboratively, and in partnership with a local evaluator working on contract with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the action team developed a list of organizations who participate in the early childhood system/network that would receive a survey. Ultimately the survey was sent out on behalf of the ¹⁰W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) as part of the Battle Creek Place-based Evaluation. Battle Creek is a geographic focus for WKKF which provides funding for organizations that focus on early childhood. The survey was sent out to those organizations via email on April 2018 and was left open for completion for approximately one month. There were two questions in the survey:

1. I exchange information, documents, schedule, and other resources with a person in the following organization(s) to get my ECE [early childhood education]- related job done.

Organization: (This question set was listed repeatedly for each organization in the list.

Please see Appendix A for the full list of organizations)

- a. Yes or No
- b. If yes, how often: daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly

2. I work collaboratively with a person in the following organization(s) on projects in the early childhood area.

Organization: (This question set was listed repeatedly for each organization in the list.

Please see Appendix A for the full list of organizations)

- a. Yes or No
- b. If yes, how often: daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly

¹⁰ The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is located in Battle Creek Michigan. It was founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life. Please see wkkf.org for more information.

The survey was sent to all of the individuals who participate in the GSC, which in some cases included multiple people from the same organization. For confidentiality purposes, only the evaluator had access to the raw data; however I was able to access the aggregated data at the organizational level. The output of this social network analysis is a map of all partners/organizations that shows how they are connected to each other (Shen, 2018). This will specifically answer the part of research question one aimed at understanding the providers and partners in the system and how they interact, including the frequency and type of interaction. Additional analysis and mapping of the network data, includes the use of KliqueFinder software, a clustering algorithm that identifies non-overlapping subgroups in social network data and a technique for producing a crystalized sociogram that maps the ties within and between cohesive subgroups (Frank, 2005). I also looked at and visually represented what key structural features such as which organizations make up the network core, which organizations make up the periphery and which organizations serve as bridging nodes or the connects between core and periphery (Kadushin 2012; Valente; 2012).

Research Question Two: What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Informal Networks of the families?

This research question is focused on constructing an understanding of the Informal Network of the families and again, combines both qualitative data and social network data.

Recruitment of Purposeful Sample

This study focuses on 7 families with a child or children between the ages of 3-4 who live below 250% of poverty in Battle Creek and qualify for free public preschool or a childcare subsidy from the state. The sample of families is diverse with respect to race/ethnicity and with respect to relative socioeconomic status. Given the qualifications to receive public funding for

preschool, all families are low income. To recruit participants, I got the permission of the licensed providers to send a flyer home to all parents with information about the study and I was present during pick up and drop off times to explain the study to parents/family members and ask for their participation. I accepted all families that said they were interested. I started with about 15 families on my follow-up list, a good mix of male and females as well as race and ethnicity. I followed up with all families on the list and was able to schedule a first interview with 10 families. Two of the families did not continue with the interview process and one family's economic status and geographic location were outside of the scope of the study. Below is a table explaining the factors that were taken into account during recruitment.

Table 1: Family Characteristics

Family Number	Income Below 250% of Poverty	¹¹ Mother's Race/Ethnicity ¹²	Mother's Age	Father's Race/Ethnicity	Father's Age	Child's Race/Ethnicity	Child's Age	¹³ Single/Married
Family 1	X	White	25	White	28	White	3	Single
Family 2	X	Black	27	Black	28	Black	4	Single
Family 3	X	White	27	Black	26	Two or more	4	Single
Family 4	X	White	33	Black	32	Two or more	4	Single
Family 5	X	Italian	30	Italian	34	Italian	3	Married/Separated /Divorced
Family 6	X	Black	32	Black	31	Black	4	Single/Married
Family 7	X	White	34	Two or more	33	Two or more	4	Married

¹¹ In all cases, the mother was my point of contact so they are the ego and at the center of the analysis for each family

¹² Terminology aligns with American Community Survey and well as the way the families self-identified

¹³ For some families this status changed during the nine-month period

The participants for my study were busy mothers, often overworked and overtired, with multiple responsibilities and limitations on their time and resources so I tried to be extremely respectful of their situations. I let them identify the time and location for the interviews and I offered compensation for their time participating in the study (\$25 gift cards for the first and second interview and a \$50 gift card for the last interview and completing the study). Given the knowledge I gained as a result of this study regarding opportunities for families within the early childhood system, I see it as my responsibility to share this information with the participants and discuss ways that they may be able to share it with their friends, family and neighbors to improve their access or experience with the early childhood system. This approach was incorporated sensitively throughout – when I saw an opportunity to connect a family with a resource I was aware of in the community, I did so. For example, one mother shared that she was having a hard time accessing a childcare subsidy for the Department of Health and Human Services and I connected her directly with a person that I knew could help.

Data Collection

The data collection efforts informed two types of analysis: a case study of each family describing their experiences seeking early childhood services for their children and their interaction with the early childhood network and an egocentric network mapping out the relationships that each family has in their personal network to support the development and education of their child/children.

Interviews

I conducted three, sixty-minute interview sessions with the mothers over the course of nine months. The first set of interviews were conducted at the beginning of the study in September and October 2018; the second round of interviews were conducted in December 2018

and January 2019; and the last set of interviews were conducted in March and April 2019. The design of conducting three interviews over nine months was based on the understanding that families may interact with the early childhood system in different ways over the course of time. For example, experiences in the summer and fall may be different than later in the year because early childhood enrollment for preschool often happens in the fall. Flu shot season begins in November so families may make a visit to the doctor. During the holiday season, depending on the need and networks of the family, they may receive additional support or donations. Based on my understanding of the early childhood system, these are the months where there tends to be the most activity or opportunities for new enrollment or interaction. The design of three interviews was also intentional because, like with any relationship, I suspected it would take time to get to know the family and have them feel as if they could respond honestly. This proved to be true. I also wanted to give myself time to analyze the data between interviews to inform the next interview and make any adjustments necessary to the interview guide. The first interview was more like an introduction and a chance to gather some preliminary information regarding family characteristics, needs, structure of the family, desires for their children, etc. I did an interview midway through because that provides some continuity and makes the gap in face-to-face communication shorter. The second interview dug more deeply into who the family interacts with, how they are experiencing the services they are receiving, where they are experiencing gaps or unmet needs, where they have had positive or negative experiences, etc. During the third interview, I asked many of the same questions from the second interview to see if new relationships or connections and have been formed and I asked participants to react to the Formal Early Childhood Provider Social Network Map and do a member check of the ego network data I gathered for each family. (Please see Appendix B for a draft of the Interview Guide)

Activity logs

I asked the families to keep an activity log of the activities they did related to how they experience the early childhood system. In our first interview we discussed the different activities they do with or for their children, such as doctor visits, trips to the library, gatherings with friends or families and I asked them to quickly document these things noting with whom they did these activities, how they found out about these activities, the benefit/value of the activity (1 – 3 scale), and whether through one contact or event they were connected to other opportunities or if that one contact lead to additional follow-up or communication. The logs turned out not to be a successful way of gathering data. Only a few families in the study kept the logs. They were helpful in those cases in the sense that they helped to generate conversation, but since they were not consistently used this did not end up being a key piece of data informing my analysis.

(Please see Appendix C for a draft of the Activity Log)

Data Analysis

Individual family case studies

Based on the interviews I constructed an illustrative case for each individual family. The intent of this case study is to share a written narrative of the lived experiences of these families in their pursuit of seeking the opportunities and services they need and desire for their young child/children in the city of Battle Creek. The data I gathered during the interviews was broken down into the following categories in an attempt to tell a relevant and comprehensive story about the family and their experiences: **family overview** - family structure including child/children overview – who are the children, what do they need, what do they like, demographics and family employment experiences; **connection to preschool** - how did the family find out about the opportunity, did they reach out or did others reach out; **reflections on experience as a parent** –

what rewarding, challenging and/or surprising about parenthood; **aspirations for their preschool aged child; background in the Battle Creek Community; Informal Ego Network** – who they go to for support, how is that support reciprocated, etc., visioning on the ideal situation/support for the child and visioning on the ideal situation/support for the parent; and **experiences with the Formal Early Childhood System Network** - positive, negative, unique and specific relationships to people and organizations in or outside of the early childhood network. During the interviews, I pursued specific stories and examples of these experiences in enough depth and detail to develop vignettes that exemplify and capture the families unique experience. There are represented in the write-up through the detailed quotes captured from the participants.

Family egocentric networks

I used the data from the family interviews to map out the egocentric networks of the families. An egocentric network (egonet) is a personal network that looks at the ties between the ego, in this case the family, and the people or organizations with whom they have relationships, or the alters (Robins, 2015). I aimed to understand how each particular family interacts with people in their personal Informal Network, the characteristics of the people in their network and the impact that has on the types of support they receive.

Using the ego network analysis as outlined by Borgatti and Ofem (2010), the first interview provided the opportunity to create a list of contacts in the network known as “name generator” (p. 27). The name generator consists of open-ended questions about the different people that the family interacts with and provides opportunities for individuals in the person’s life, or “alters” as to be generated. This roster of names serves as the basis for the second stage of questions that Borgatti and Ofem (2010) refer to as “name interpreter” which include follow-

up questions such as is this a friend, a co-worker, etc. to better understand the nature of the relationships.

After the first interview the recordings were transcribed and I created a spreadsheet with a list of every person or organization that the family stated was in their personal network. For each person/organization I gathered information including gender, age, race/ethnicity, occupation, relationships to the family, geographic location, frequency of contact, do they come to you for support, do you go to them for support, do they provide everyday types of support, do they provide emergency support, and over what period of time have they been in your network. These questions were informed by Wellman and Frank (2000).

Wellman and Frank (2000) provides a good conceptual frame for how to think about a multi-level approach that integrates analysis levels into a comprehensive analysis of the individual, tie and network. “Not only do people need – and want – to know which kinds of people (an individual-level analysis) and relationships (a tie-level analysis) are apt to provide different kinds of support, they also need and want to know the extent to which their social networks as a whole can support them (a network-level analysis)” (Frank & Wellman, 2000, p. 4). While I did not gather the type of data necessary to conduct the statistical model for this study, the types of information Wellman and Frank (2000) collected informed the questions I asked during my interviews (Wellman and Frank (2000) had data from a random sample survey of 845 adults and I am conducting qualitative interviews with 7 families): (1) Ego’s Social Characteristics: The needs and resources that a person already possesses, including their ability to attract social support; (2) Network Size: The number of ties that a person (“ego”) has in his/her personal network; (3) Resource Possession: The resources that these network members who are called “alters” possess; (4) Ego-Alter Similarity: The similarity of ego’s and alters’

social characteristics; (5) Resource Availability: The willingness of alters, such as friends and family, to provide these resources to ego; (6) Resource Delivery: The ability of alters to deliver these resources to ego (*the extent to which I will be able to answer this may be limited*); (7) Support History: The support that alters have already given to egos, short-term and long-term; (8) Reciprocity: The history of support that egos have given to alters; (9) Network Composition: The characteristics of all alters in a network, both (a) Similarity: The tendency of similar alters to facilitate each other's delivery of resources. (b) Dissimilarity: The diversity of alters in a network; (10) Network Structure: The structure of interpersonal relations that: (a) Information Flows: Disseminate knowledge about ego's needs and resources (b) Social Control: Facilitate or constrain the provision of resources; (11) Indirect Ties: Ties to people outside the network that provide access to additional resources (p 3).

Overarching Research Question: How do families enter into and experience different features, opportunities and organizations in a Formal Early Childhood System Network?

The focus of this question is on the entry points and overlap between the Informal Networks and the Formal Network. Using the data and context created from research sub-questions one and two, I made multiple comparisons across cases.

Comparative Case Studies

The comparison of each individual family Informal Network to the Formal Network, was treated as a case and cross case comparisons are then made across families analyzing the data using structured focused comparison (George and Bennett, 2005). This approach allowed for a detailed consideration of contextual factors (George and Bennet, 2005) that are central to proper social science understanding (Byrne and Ragin, 2009).

Comparison of Informal Ego Networks with Formal Network Organizations/Entry Points

During the family interviews, I asked the parent to reflect on when they needed to get information to support their child and the different people and organizations they encountered as they do things with or for their child. I followed-up with questions such as who did they contact, how valuable was the information, did they receive any follow-up contact or did they follow-up or make additional contacts, did they receive any referrals and did they share that information with anyone else. Across all three interviews I looked for who was in their social network, what was the value of the information and resources they provided, did the contact provide access to additional services, and over what period of time was the contact sustained.

An expanded version of the ego network was created that includes the organizations the mother was connected to, providing an understanding of how each particular mother/family interacts with the people/organizations in the Formal Network and/or whether their network includes people and organizations they interact with that are not identified in the Formal Network. I looked at the alignment or overlap between the organizations, or employees of organizations, that a family has in their ego network and the organizations represented in the Formal Network. Do any organizations seem to serve as a bridging node (Valente, 2012) or a “front porch” for families (Callejas et al., 2010)? Do any of the families appear to be the cultural brokers (Ishimaru et al., 2016, Lareau, 2005)? Those points of overlap are defined in this study and outlined in the conceptual framework as the entry points. This data allowed me to learn more about the connections the family has to the Formal Network. I also learned how each family gets and/or shares information, resources and support regarding early childhood and this showed if there are gaps in their networks. For example, is a healthcare provider missing?

An important affordance of this approach relevant to this study is the examination of the social environment directly surrounding individuals and the conclusions that can be drawn about

social aspects conducive to effective social support. “If we are attempting to intervene, does the social environment need to be changed or does the individual need to respond differently? If social factors count, then individualized interventions may fail; if individual effects matter than changing the social world alone may not have an impact,” (Robins, 2015, pg. 41). It could be a combination of both and knowing more will support the development of more appropriate and successful network structures and interventions.

Comparison of Informal/Formal Networks Across Families

As noted above, each family was asked the same set of questions supporting the comparison across families. During this portion of the comparison I paid close attention to family experiences in comparison to one another, to how ego and alter characteristics such as race/ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status seem to impact who is in a family network, how a family enters the Formal Network, with whom in the network they are connected, how those connections were made, how those experiences have been for the family and ultimately, whether and how they have received the support, relationships and services they want and need to support the success of their child/children.

In making the cross-case comparisons, the first area I explore is at a very basic level, are there organizations that are showing up in more than one family network. If so, who are these organizations and do they have similar characteristics? The next area I explore is whether those organizations are referring the families to other organizations within and/or outside of the Formal Network? Next I explore the entry points for families or what the data tells about whether a family, or multiple families enter into the network through the same handful of organizations or people and are those organizations in the Formal Network or are they unique organizations identified by the family. Finally, I conclude by looking more closely at the ego networks of each

organization (if available¹⁴) and the characteristics of the organizations that have shown to be important to the families in this study. Through the exploration of each area mentioned above, I bring in the relevant qualitative data from the family cases in an attempt to tell a more complete and detailed story answering questions such as: is more than one family having a similar experience with an organizations or set of organizations?; when the data from the family networks is combined with the formal network do cluster or relationships emerges?; are there ties between organizations not documented in the Formal Network that are created by the family interactions between them?

This comparison across families will provide a deeper understanding of whether there are certain components or stakeholders within the system that are accessed more or less often and the degree of quality/value of each interaction. Again, this approach also aligns with the intent of social network research. According to Kadushin (2012), “Assessing an individuals’ or a community’s networked resources requires mapping the full network, ascertaining the resources available in various domains to each member of the network, and finding the ways that the resources are or are not made available to various individuals and to the community as a whole” (pg. 167). This combination of the social network analysis and the case study approach that I have taken to gain a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of the families allows for a more complete understanding to be constructed of the family experience with the Formal Network, which will be evident in the results chapters that follow.

¹⁴ If an organization did not complete the survey that was analyzed in question one, they will not ego network data available.

Chapter IV – Results from Research Sub-Question One

What constitutes the make-up, structure and function of the Formal Early Childhood

System Network within the Battle Creek community?

Question one is addressed through both document analysis and social network analysis. This approach provides a comprehensive overview of the organizations within the network, how the network is structured and the function of the organizations within the network.

Document Analysis

The “Great Start Collaborative” Intermediary in Battle Creek

An important structural feature of the Formal Early Childhood Network in Battle Creek is the intermediary functions that are provided by two organizations, the Calhoun Intermediate School District and BC Pulse, who administer the Great Start Collaborative, part of The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). GSRP is Michigan’s state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children in families who make up to 250% of the federal poverty level in terms of annual income. The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start. The funding is allocated to each intermediate school district to administer the programs locally. Essentially this program provides full and half day preschool experiences for children during the school year. These programs are meant to help children develop socially, emotionally and academically and be better prepared to enter kindergarten (www.michigan.gov/mde).

As part of the GSRP program, communities are required by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to create a Great Start Collaborative (GSC). According to the MDE

Endorsement Guidelines:

The overall purpose of a GSC is to create a single, interconnected, intertwined network of public and private programs, services, and supports, working together in a community to accomplish better results for young children and families. The GSC's membership is comprised of public and private organizations, businesses, philanthropic organizations, parents of young children, and other key community leaders that serve young children and their families. All GSCs have developed comprehensive strategic plans¹⁵ focused on the five Great Start components: pediatric and family health, social and emotional health, child care and early education, parenting leadership, and family support (www.michigan.gov/mde).

The Great Start Collaborative that serves the Battle Creek community is administered by the Calhoun County Intermediate School District (CISD) and pulls partners together on a quarterly basis. The partners of the GSC that serves Battle Creek include public and private organizations, businesses, philanthropic organizations, a parent coalition, early childhood providers, licensed and registered preschool providers, K-12 education, higher education, healthcare organizations, and other key community leaders that serve young children and their families. The individuals representing these organizations range from front line providers to directors, executive directors and even superintendents. These quarterly meetings are meant to provide an opportunity for partners to network and to align their services to develop a more effective early childhood system and to work together to address the priorities identified by the GCS. As noted in the Endorsement Guidelines above, each GSC is required to develop a comprehensive strategic plan and within that plan the GSC identifies priorities. The process to develop the strategic plan is collaborative and participatory and gives all partners the opportunity to contribute. These Calhoun County/Battle Creek GSC priorities include:

1. Parent engagement which focuses on creating opportunities for parents with young children to have voice, decision-making authority and leadership in the early childhood network.
2. Ensuring all children are healthy and developmentally on track.
3. Improving the quality of early childhood experiences.
4. Using data to inform action and to create a stronger network/system of support for children and families.
5. Increasing access to early childhood experiences for all families.

In addition to the quarterly meetings of the GSC described above, the CISD has partnered with BC Pulse, a project of Michigan State University focused on developing an early childhood system in Battle Creek, to organize Early Childhood Action Teams that meet on a monthly basis to address in more depth the priorities of the GCS listed above. Together these two organizations serve as the intermediary organization coordinating the early childhood system/network in Battle Creek. BC Pulse¹⁶ was identified to facilitate these meetings because of the alignment with their mission “to build an action learning movement that transforms the service delivery system to improve outcomes for children and families” (bcpulse.org). These monthly Action Team meetings provide the partners mentioned above an opportunity to go more in depth on the

¹⁶ As an organization BC Pulse has the following goals that they apply to their systems building work: increased coordination and alignment, more accessible quality services and opportunities, a resident centered service delivery model, and embedded and continual learning¹⁶. The belief or theory of change is that if the people and organizations surrounding children and their families are better coordinated, aligned and informed by the actual needs of children and families, then we will begin to see shifts in services that will lead to better outcomes. BC Pulse was also modeled after a framework described in an article published in the American Journal of Community Psychology *The ABLe Change Framework: A Conceptual and Methodological Tool for Promoting Systems Change*. This intervention is entirely focused on systems change and developed out of the System of Care (SOC) approach with a recognition that there is an additional need to focus not only on the improvement and expansion of effective community programs, but more importantly on transforming the entire local service system in a community (Foster-Fishman & Watson, p 1).

priorities that are most relevant to the work of their organization. For example, many of the healthcare organizations are most interested in ensuring children are healthy and developmentally on track so they will likely opt to participate in the Action Team focused on that priority. Many of the individual participants come to represent an organization, but also hold content expertise in the different areas such as health, education, early development, etc. Not all GSC partners participate in an Action Team as it is optional and participation is often based on the capacity of the organization and their ability to send staff to meetings and assign staff to engage more deeply in the work. The Action Teams include: the Trusted Advisors Action Team to address priority one; the Healthy and Developmentally on Track Action Team to address priority two; the Quality Early Childhood Experiences Action Team to address priority three; the Data, Learning and Continuous Improvement Action Team to address priority four; and the Public Will-Building and Resource Development Action Team to address priority five. Each of the Action Teams has identified more specific goals and priorities and uses their monthly meeting to discuss actions toward achieving those goals and to stay aligned and connected. The Trusted Advisors Action Team has worked with parents to provide community organizing training, has developed a diaper network to support families who struggle to afford diapers and partnered with a public housing neighborhood to develop a plan to better address the needs of the resident families. The Healthy and Developmentally on Track Action Team has created a toolkit for families about early health and development, supported professional development for early educators on trauma informed approaches and created community-wide opportunities for community members to learn more about early childhood trauma and approaches to support families. The Quality Early Childhood Experiences Action Team has supported the development of a Shared Services Alliance that brings together early childhood providers to share resources so

they can experience cost savings and direct those saving towards improving the quality of their programs and they have created opportunities for better connections to form between preschool programs and kindergarten programs. The Data, Learning and Continuous Improvement Action Team is working on developing shared indicators and data collection efforts to measure the collective effort of the network and is also supporting the mapping of the network to better understand how people/organizations are working together. This team provided input into the network analysis that will be discussed below. And finally, the Public Will-Building and Resource Development Action Team has created a marketing campaign to better reach families with messages and information about early childhood opportunities in the community. Overall the efforts of the individual Action Teams are meant to add up to a stronger early childhood network and a better experience for children and families in Battle Creek (BC Pulse documentation, 2018).

Organizational Mission and Vision

The majority of the 78 organizations that were in the social network analysis are part of the Great Start Collaborative. Data on the mission and vision of each organization was gathered and coding was done of key words in the mission and/or vision statements. Several things can be taken away from this data include 34 organizations had children, family or and/or parent in their mission or vision; 42 organizations included the word community; 20 included equity/diversity/culture/discrimination/justice; and five organizations included all three key word sets. For the purposes of this first research question this data is descriptive proving a better idea of who is in the network. Later in the study the data is analyzed in comparison with the family network data to look for patterns and relationships between the characteristics of the

organizations including how and where they are showing up in the network. (The mission/vision statements of all organizations as well as the coding is in Appendix D).

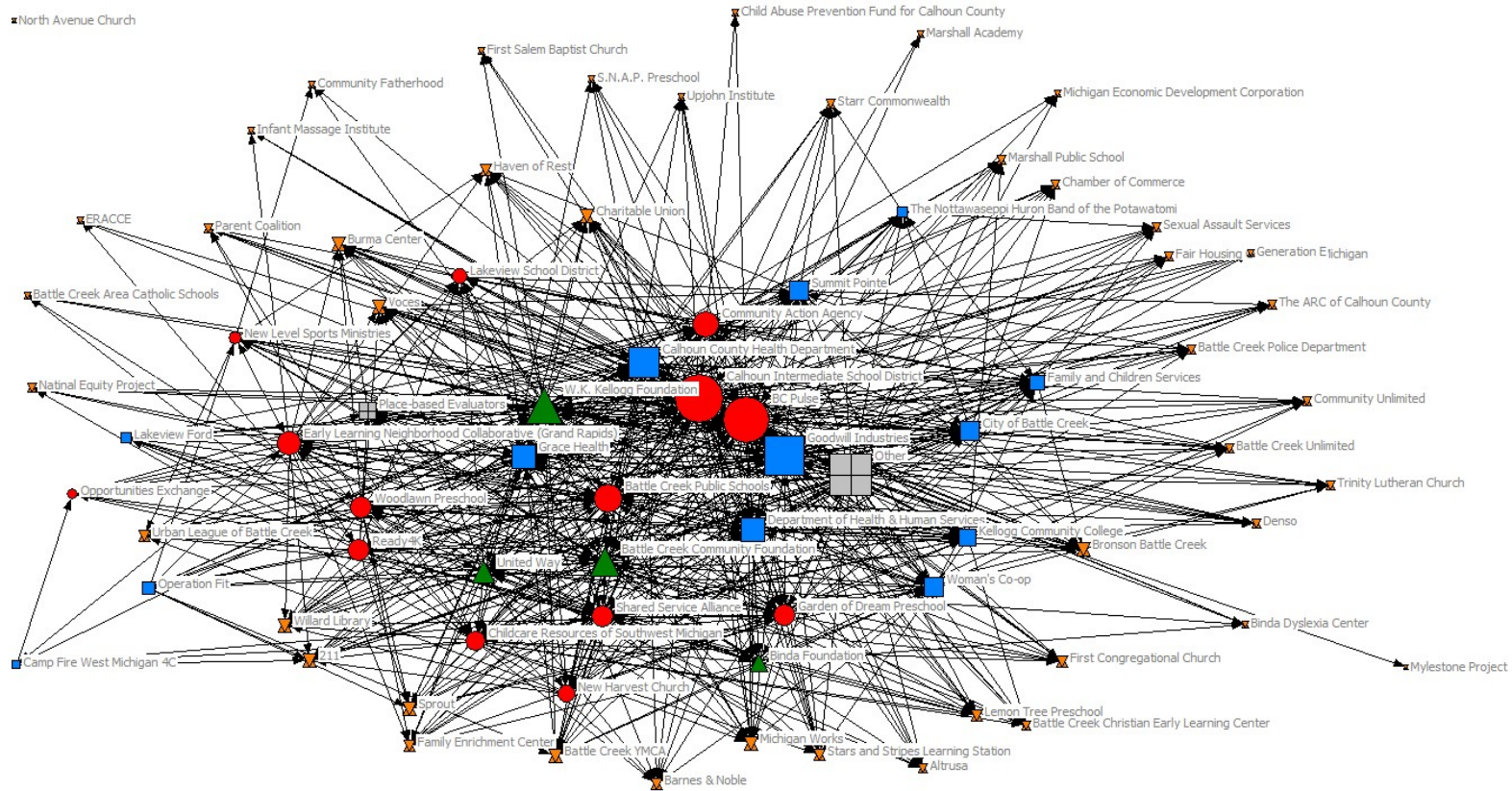
Social Network Analysis

The visual below (Figure 2) shows the responses from the network - a network of 78 organizations with many dense connections (Shen, 2018). As noted below, the red circles are early childhood organizations, the blue squares are non-early childhood organizations, the green triangles are organizations that provide funding, the gray boxes are “other” representing the option survey respondents had on the survey to select “other” as a response, and the orange double triangles are organizations that were mentioned in the survey, but who did not actually participate in the survey and were therefore unable to self-identify into one of the aforementioned categories. The larger the shape the more ties that organization has. The black lines show the ties between the organizations. Given the density of this network, it is difficult to see the individual ties, however, the size of the nodes and the location give an indication of which organizations are more centralized and more connected. What can be seen in the visual is there are several organizations that are large and centralized signifying that they make up the core of this network, having the greatest number of ties and the highest degree of centrality. The smaller symbols that are located more along the outside of the network signify organizations that have fewer ties with other organizations and are therefore less central in the network. From this visual, we begin to learn more about the network capital of this Formal Network, or the who is sharing with whom.

Figure 2: Social Network Analysis of All Organizations within the Formal Early Childhood System Network

Question 1: I exchange information, documents, schedule, and other resources with a person in the following organization(s) to get my job done.

Network of All Organizations



Note.1.Red Circles : ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Up Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: others.

The Emergence of a Core Cluster

For this first research question I am considering the core organizations as the most relevant in the network at this point. Other organizations will become relevant for further analysis as they are identified by the families in the presentation of further data. Ten organizations emerged as part of the core cluster¹⁷ each with at least 33¹⁸ ties to other organizations, that were highly connected based on the network data showing that not only are these core organizations connected to many other organizations throughout the network, they are connected to each other. The two organizations with the most connections are the two organizations identified in the beginning as serving in the intermediary role – The Calhoun Intermediate School District (CISD) and BC Pulse. They are the only two service providing organizations in the network that are within a two-step reach of every other organization in the entire network, providing strong evidence of their coordinating role in the network. Additionally, the CISD has the most direct relationships with 66 direct connections and BC Pulse has the second most relationships with 55. With these types of connections it is also not a surprise that the CISD and BC Pulse have significantly higher Broker numbers, meaning the

¹⁷ The data was run in KliqueFinder, a clustering algorithm that identifies non-overlapping subgroups in social network data and is a technique for producing a crystalized sociogram that maps the ties within and between cohesive subgroups (Frank, 2005). This analysis revealed that there were no clusters, there was one large group of 69 members identified and six tag-a-longs, organizations that were only in one cluster by themselves. These organizations included Battle Creek Area Catholic Schools, Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan, Generation E, National Equity Project, S.N.A.P Preschool, and Upjohn Institute. These six tag-a-longs are not surprising either as The Fair Housing, Upjohn and National Equity project are not located in the Battle Creek Community (as noted below by their zip code), specifically National Equity Project is a national nonprofit that has done some consulting in Battle Creek and Upjohn is primarily a research institution. SNAP is no longer open, Generation E tends to serve an older age group of children and antidotally, the Catholic Schools is like a community within a community.

¹⁸ More detail about the Core Cluster is included in Appendix E

number of times they lie on the shortest path between two alters allowing them to make connections between organizations (1916.5 and 1268.5 respectively). Additional analysis was done looking at organizations in the core cluster, secondary cluster, tertiary cluster and quaternary cluster: core cluster includes organizations with 33 degrees (connections) or more; secondary cluster includes organizations with 30 – 32 degrees; tertiary cluster 20 - 29 degrees and quaternary cluster 10 degrees or more. This was determined looking at the distribution across all organizations and where there seemed to be natural clustering.

This core cluster includes Calhoun Intermediate School District, Calhoun County Health Department, BC Pulse, Goodwill Industries, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Grace Health, Battle Creek Public Schools, Battle Creek Community Foundation, Community Action Agency, and the Department of Health and Human Services. These organizations are considered the core cluster with 33 degrees or more¹⁹ (visuals of the clusters are included in the Appendix F).

Of the core organizations in the cluster two are education intuitions, Battle Creek Public Schools and the Calhoun Intermediate School District; one is an intermediary type of organization, BC Pulse; three are organizations pertaining to health, the Calhoun County Health Department, Grace Health and the Department of Health and Human Services; and two are multipurpose types of institutions that have cross cutting focuses including education, employment and family stability types of programs, Goodwill Industries and the Community

¹⁹ A Core/Periphery test in UCINET resulted in a fit (correlation) of 0.6827, indicating that this network does indeed have a core/periphery structure. The UCINET test indicated that there were 18 organizations in the core and 60 in the periphery. All 10 organizations identified as part of the core, using the measure of 33 degrees or above, are included in the core identified using UCINET, along with eight additional organizations including Childcare Resources of Southwest Michigan (26 degrees), Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative (Grand Rapids) (31 degrees), Garden of Dream Preschool (30 degrees), Ready4K (27 connections), Shared Service Alliance (30 connections), Summit Pointe (26 connections), Woman's Co-op (24 connections) and Woodlawn Preschool (29 connections). The core included in the UCINET analysis expands the core down to a cutoff of 24 degrees or connections to other actors, with the exception of United Way (28) and City of Battle Creek (24). The core I identified for my study is more restrictive.

Action Agency. Two of the organizations, the Battle Creek Community Foundation and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation provide funding and other resources for the community. Anecdotally, I am aware that of the 11 leaders guiding these organizations (one has a co-leadership model) 3 identify as women of color, 3 as white women, 1 as a man of color, 4 as white men, and one is unknown. This type of diversity among the leadership of organizations in the nonprofit sector is not common. According to a 2017 report put out by Race to Lead and partially funded by the Annie E Casey Foundation, the percentage of people of color in executive director/CEO positions within the nonprofit sector has remained under 20% for the last 15 years, even as the country has become more diverse. The percentage of leaders of color among this core group of organizations is 36% percent which closely reflects the demographic diversity of the community. This is an important area of continued focus as the Race to Lead Report highlights from their survey of over 4,000 participants that 79% agreed that it is a “Big Problem” that the nonprofit leadership doesn’t represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States. The table below provides a more detailed overview of each organization in the Network Core including the mission and the programs and services they have available for children and families.

Table 2: Network Core Organizational Overviews

Organization	Mission	Programs and Services for Children and Families
Battle Creek Community Foundation	We promote giving, build endowment, and provide leadership to improve quality of life.	Grants, scholarships, Kool Family Community Center,
Battle Creek Public Schools	We engage, empower, and collaborate to educate and prepare every Bearcat for college, career, and life as a global citizen.	Parent University, Multilingual and Diversity Resources, Community Partnerships, Family engagement, Ombudsmen, Information and Outreach services, 9th Grade Academy, 21st Century Before and After School, Advanced and Accelerated Program Ann J Kellogg Art and Technology Focus, Early Childhood Education, Fine Arts Academy, Legacy Scholars, Math and Science Center, Online Pre-Enrollment, Outdoor Education Center, SEED Award, Summer Programs
BC Pulse	To connect, leverage, support, and align current and future system change efforts to better meet the needs of children and families.	Early Childhood Work Group; Groups formed to identify community needs and problems and then brainstorm solutions to those problems;
Calhoun County Health Department	Enhance our community's total well-being by promoting healthy lifestyles, protecting health, and preventing disease.	hearing/vision testing; CSHCS program; vaccinations; offering free baby products; teen outreach program program; discount prescription cards
Calhoun Intermediate School District	The mission of the Calhoun Intermediate School District is to develop, coordinate and provide researched-based educational services for its constituencies in an innovative and responsive manner to prepare those we serve to succeed in a global society.	Early Childhood Services, Special Education Services, operates the instruction at the juvenile home in Marshall.
Community Action Agency	Dedicated to helping people achieve and maintain independence.	Food assistance programs; GED programs; lead safe program; Head Start; home meal delivery; home repairs and transportation provided
Department of Health & Human Services	Enhance our community's total well-being by promoting healthy lifestyles, protecting health, and preventing disease.	Health clinics; senior services; emergency preparedness and relief; children's care; teen outreach program; WIC;
Goodwill Industries	Our mission is to improve the community. We do this by providing employment, education, training and support services tailored to individual needs.	9,997 services provided; Life Guides program helps families obtain skills and receive the support necessary to obtain better jobs, safer housing, access to education, and financial literacy; The Why Work Program
Grace Health	To provide patient-centered healthcare with excellence in quality, service, and access.	Behavioral health; dental; general health; health education; internal medicine; OBGYN; vision care; pediatrics; pharmacy; physical therapy; podiatry; pet therapy; school based health services; after-hours nurse services; counseling; lab services; fresh food initiative; interpreters; transportation assistance
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	The W.K. Kellogg Foundation supports children, families and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society.	Private grantmaking institution

Summary

The data set for question one allows for a limited set of observations to be made from the social network analysis and document analysis. At a minimum it can be concluded that the organizations that responded to the social network analysis survey do exchange information documents, schedules, and other resources, showing evidence of the development of network capital for the system overall. A core cluster of 10 organizations emerged, that were highly connected based on the network data, including the two intermediary organizations identified in the outset of this study (The Calhoun Intermediate School District and BC Pulse). While a core was identified, there did not appear to be any specific clustering by types of services offered or any other features. Of the 11 people leading these organizations (one has a

co-leadership model) 3 identify as women of color, 3 as white women, 1 as a man of color, 4 as white men, and one is unknown. This type of diversity among the leadership of organizations in the nonprofit sector is not common (Race to the Top, 2007). Regarding the function the network, over half the 78 organizations in the Formal Network have a mission/vision focused on children, families and/or communities and about a quarter of the organizations have an explicit equity or social justice priority or focus, signifying at least some in the network are explicitly stating a need to address inequities. The qualitative data also stated the complex social problems or challenges the Formal System is trying to address overall including improving outcomes for children and families through specific approaches such as parent engagement, ensuring children are health and developmentally on track, improving quality and access of experiences and using data to create a stronger system.

The limitation of this data is that it does not answer the question of whether this exchange of information, etc. is allowing the organizations to better meet the needs of the population they serve. It represents only the perspective of the organizations surveyed; however, with the addition of family perspective data in question two, I intend to shine a light on what this network analysis might actually mean to the families in Battle Creek seeking opportunities for their children. I will refer back to this network analysis and specific organizations within as they become relevant based on the family data.

Chapter V – Results from Research Sub-Question Two

What constitutes the make-up and structure of the Informal Networks of individual families?

At the outset of my study, I set out to capture the experiences of families who were interacting with the Formal Early Childhood System Network. In the beginning I had recruited mostly women, but also several men who showed interest in participating; however, the sample that ended up committing to take this journey of sharing and learning with me, ended up being seven inspiring women. As such, these results reflect the experiences of women, a diverse group of mothers, navigating the opportunities and supports they want for their children, their families, and themselves. Each story provides a window into the perspectives of these individual women and helps to shed light on their lived experiences navigating the Formal Network of opportunities.

Below I have provided a brief description of each of the families in this study. I have also included ego networks for each mother based on the interview data. During the course of the three interviews, each woman was asked greater detail about the people who play an important role in her life. Information was gathered, as noted in the interview guide in Appendix B, about the demographic information of each person within her network, the frequency of contact, whether the relationships were reciprocal and any additional information the women wanted to share about key people in her life. That information was used to construct ego networks for each woman in this study. (A full case study write-up for each family is located in the Appendix G)

What follows is a comparison across the cases in key areas including how their child got connected to preschool, their reflections on experiences as a parent, aspirations for their children and reflections on living in the Battle Creek community (a table comparing key responses across similar categories is located in Appendix H). A comparison is also done across the Informal Networks of the women.

Family Overview and Informal Ego Network

Case 1 – Emily²⁰, Cody and Derek

Emily is a 25-year-old single-mom with two son's Cody, 3 and Derek, 5. Her income is below 250% poverty and both she and her sons identify as white. She works part time as a contracted employee in a business setting, which she considers "super flexible" and allows her time to volunteer at her sons' schools. Her son Cody has been attending Preschool Center 1 since he was two years old. Emily describes her family as "close-nit". "We like to explore and do activities. Everybody is social. We like to meet other families, and do playdates, and stuff like that. I would say we are active in the community". She meets a lot of people on Facebook. Emily helps with Picture Day and other types of opportunities at Preschool Center 1. She is also involved in her son Derek's school and serves on the PTA.

Emily describes herself as a "very resourceful person". She finds many of her resources online by Googling and using Facebook on her phone. "There are different groups on Facebook that are helpful for families that are financially unstable." One specific group is called the Help and Hopes Closet "It's run by this little old lady, and everyone just donates stuff to her house. It's kind of like Goodwill, but it's all free, so you just take stuff to her house, and then, she sorts it

²⁰ The names of all people in this study are pseudonyms or non-identifying names such as Mom, Dad, etc. to protect the identities of the people in this study.

out, and people come and get it. It's really awesome. And then, also, in general, there is always a lot of information people post, like jobs, and all kinds of stuff on that page.”

Emily's Informal Ego Network.

Emily has a network of 20 people. As noted in the literature review, homophily is the concept that networks are homogenous with regard to many sociodemographic, behavioral, and intrapersonal characteristics and this can be extremely limiting to people's social worlds and also have implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience (McPherson, 2001; Lin 2000). There is also a tendency for those in disadvantaged socioeconomic positions to cluster together regarding people of similar characteristics, race, gender, religion (Lin, 2000; McPherson, 2002). This is true for Emily's network with 95% of her alters being white, 75% of her alters being female, and 80% of her alters living in Battle Creek. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied with 4 people in the Business and Financial Operations Occupations²¹; 3 people in Personal Care and Service Occupations; 3 people in Transportation and Material Moving Occupations; and 4 people in Educational Instruction and Library Occupations (all of whom work at Preschool Center 1). Emily also had very regular contact with 65% of her network in daily or weekly communication. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is weighted toward more brief relationships with 50% being less than 4 years. Forty-five percent of her relationships have been in existence over 25 years; however those are all family members. When asked if Emily felt like she was getting the support she needed from her Informal Network, she said “Yes, there isn't anything missing”. Cody and Derek's dad is not included in Emily's ego network of support because they do not have contact with him. Below is a key for the ego networks. The ego is the

²¹ Employment categories based on the United States Department of Labor 2018 Standard Occupational Classification System.

mother, or in this case Emily, located at the center of the network. The shapes represent gender, the colors represent race/ethnicity, the size represents age and each shape is labeled with terms that signify whether the person is a family member, friend, etc. The arrows show relationships with the length of the arrow representing frequency of contact, the width representing the period of time of the relationships and the direction representing reciprocity.

Key for the Informal Ego Networks

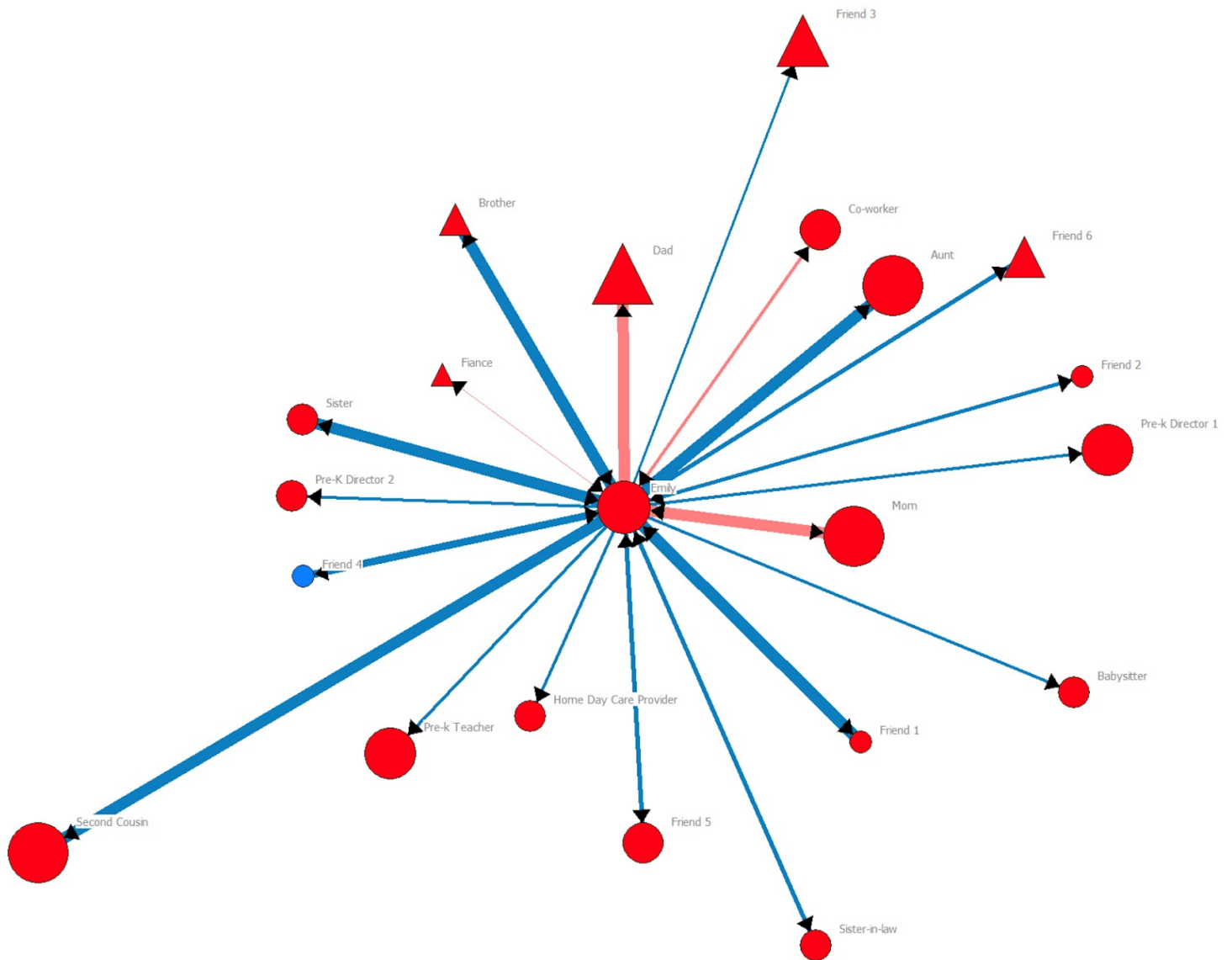
Shape, size, color, and label of the nodes

Shape for gender	Triangle for male (1) Circle for female (2)
Size for age	Corresponding to age (the bigger, the more years of age: (except for the ego which is not proportional in order to show the arrows))
Color for race/ethnicity	Black for Unknown (0) Brown for Black/African American (1) Blue for two or more races (2) Red for Caucasian (3) Green for "Mexican" (4) Purple for Italian (5) Yellow for German (6) Grey for Peruvian (7)
Label for the node	Specific terms for family member, friend, professional worker, co-worker, etc.

Length, width, color, and arrow(s) of the line between the ego and alter

Length for frequency of contact	Generally, the longer the line, the less frequent of the contact (except for "5, as needed"): 1 for yearly; 2 for quarterly; 3 for monthly; 4 for daily; and 5 for as needed.
Width for period of time	The longer the period of time, the thicker the line, 0=less than a year, 1= 1 to 4 year; 2 = 5 to 9 years, 3 = 10-14 years, 4 = 15-19 years, 5 = 20-24 years, 6=25-29 years, 7=30-34 years, and 8=35-40 years.
Color for the geographic location of the alter (a proxy for the geographic distance between the ego and alter)	Blue for 1 (Battle Creek), pink for 2 (other)
Arrow(s) of the line	Lines with double arrows denote a reciprocal relationship; lines with a single arrow denote a one-way relationship.

Figure 3 Emily's Informal Ego Network



Case 2 – Jai'lysa and Malikai

Jai'lysa is a 27-year mother with one son Malikai, 4. Her income is below 250% of poverty and both she and her son identify as African American. Jai'lysa and Malakai's dad are together and they were living together, but now they are living in separate places. Jai'lysa was working third shift at a nursing home. From there she worked at a drug rehab center and is now employed in a business administration type of position. Jai'lysa got her degree from Sienna Heights in Community and Human Services. When asked to describe her family, Jai'lysa didn't

just describe her immediate family, “Well, it's me and Malikai, his dad, my mom, my sister... I have two brothers as well. My grandpa, my aunt, and my cousin. All of us have kids, so I won't even include them, as they're just a bunch of little kids.” Most of her close family lives in Battle Creek. “All of my family members are just like me – they're all bubbly, and just positive. And we don't really get into fights. I have never heard of my family members being into anything negative, or any drama or anything. So, that's my immediate family. Jai'lysa described some differences between her immediate family and her extended family. “As far as my extended family, they're pretty different than my immediate family. My extended family are more negative, like they like drama, and they keep drama going. So, we don't really get together a whole lot, just because of stuff like that. Not because of, "Oh, you're bad people, so don't come by us. It's just like with some people, you have to love them from a distance.” Given these circumstances, Jai'lysa notes that her extended family really only gets together on holidays.

Jai'lysa described Malikai as, “the typical toddler”. “Energetic, although maybe more energetic than most kids. He likes to pretend he is a dinosaur and sometimes a bat. He's one of those kids who thinks he is in action figure mode when we go out places.” Jai'lysa also describes Malikai as her sidekick “We do everything together...He goes grocery shopping, and when I go get my nails done, he's right there. So, we do everything together.” Jai'lysa describes what they like to do together. “The thing that we most like to do at home is run around the house and play hide-and-seek. Or I'll pretend he's Black Panther, and I'm the Rhino – That was their pet in the movie. So, he likes it when I run around like the Rhino, and he's on my back. So, really, he does everything with me. His dad works second shift, so he's always tired or at work.”

Jai'lysa shared that she struggles with anxiety since becoming a parent but that she has found ways to cope such as remaining calm and counting in her head. She also shared a unique

family support system that she has created on Facebook – an online chat. “Every single day, people say, "Good morning. Good afternoon. What's going on? How's work?" All day.” She finds this very supportive because quite a few people in her family deal with depression. It’s a place where they can all talk and share their feelings. Jai’lysa said if someone is feeling lonely, there are so many people on the chat that someone will stop by.

Jai’lysa’s Informal Ego Network.

Jai’lysa has a network of 22 people. Her network has a fair amount of diversity with 64% of her alters being Black/African American, 27% White, 9% Mexican and 68% of her alters being female and a wide range of employment statuses within her network ranging from Management Occupations, to Community and Social Service, to Educational, Protective Services, Construction and Extraction, to Healthcare Practitioners. Geography is an area of greater homophily for Jai’lysa was 95% of her network living in Battle Creek . The employment status of the alters is fairly varied with 4 people in the Business and Financial and 2 people unemployed. Jai’lysa also had very regular contact with 64% of her network in daily or weekly communication. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is weighted toward more toward longer relationships with half of her network relationships in existence for over 20 years.

When asked if Jai’lysa felt like she was getting the support she needed from her Informal Network, she shared that she gets a lot of support from her mom and sister, “But the main support that is lacking is from his [Malikai’s] dad, pretty much.” Jai’lysa is pretty selective in who she asks for support because she “...hates to ask for something I’m supposed to have control over.” Emotionally, she relies on her Cousin 1. She also depends on her grandpa, her

Cousin 2 and her brother. Her dad has been there for her son, “But as far as me, he's just like, ‘Oh, you're grown.’” Overall, Jai’lysa feels like she gets the support she needs from her network.

I feel like whenever I need anyone to watch my son, or to help me with my son, I have it. My son is on spring break now, and he's home with my sister. She's on spring break, too. If I didn't have my sister, I would have had to pay for him to go to the daycare. Anytime I need any type of help or assistance with him, I always have help. Or if I ever needed money, or any type of help, I can ask pretty much any of these people, and they would help me, or get me to where I need to go.” Jai’lysa goes on to share that her sister and her son are “have the time of their life at home right now” while she is working.

Jai’lysa shared some reflections on what her ideal situation for support would be:

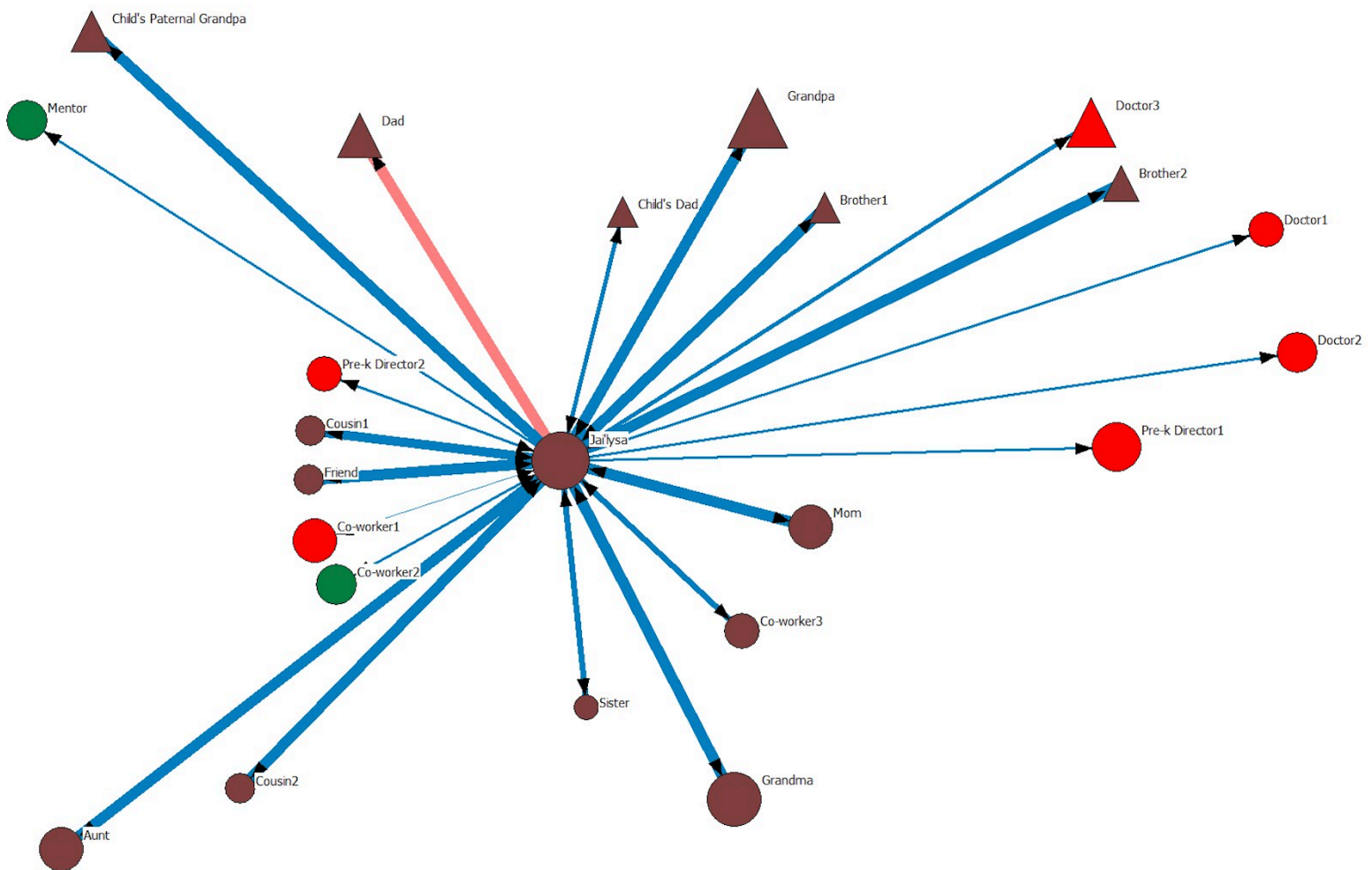
Well, I am going to get kind of personal.

His dad and I are together, but we are working through some situations, because he just turned 29, and I feel like he's not up to where he should be. I shouldn't have to reach out to DHS. I don't feel like I should have to do that, but I feel like a single mom, because I have to. I can't depend on him as much as I want to. I wish he and I could be together, so that he could help me pay bills, help me pay for daycare, we'd be all set, I wouldn't need DHS, I wouldn't need to ask for other help from anyone... I wish we could be married.

That would just be perfect for me. But I don't think it's going to be there. That's why we're not living together. We're kind of separated until we can work that out, because I don't think that's going to work with us. But even if not, like even if we're not together, the perfect scenario would be for me to be able to not need DHS at all. I can provide for him, and I'm kind of at the verge where I don't really need DHS so much anymore anyway, but it is helpful. But he gets insurance from DHS. He gets the Medicaid. So even

if I were able to put him on my insurance, that would be a lot of money. I wouldn't be able to afford it. So, basically, I wish I could just get a big raise, or get a big promotion, and be able to just not have to worry about money situations or anything. Because other than that, I don't really worry about money situations, but I wish I didn't have to worry about DHS and those types of things. So, that would just be perfect for me, if I could just be more successful.

Figure 4 Jai'lysa's Informal Ego Network



Key - Node: Triangle-Male; Circle-Female; Node - Bigger the Size the more years of age; Color - Black for Unknown, Brown for Black/African American, Blue for two or more races, Red for Caucasian, Green for “Mexican”, Purple for Italian, Yellow for German, Grey for Peruvian; **Lines:** Longer the line the less frequent the interactions; thicker the line the longer period of time

of relationships; blue for lives in Battle Creek and pink for other; and **Arrows:** denote direction of relationship.

Case 3 – Hannah and Alison

Hannah is a 27-year-old single-mom with one daughter, Ali, 4. Her income is below 250% of poverty and both she and her daughter identify as white. During the first interview Hannah was employed by a pediatric office. Her hours were typically 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. but sometimes she had to stay until 7:00p.m. on nights when they were busy. With Ali getting out of preschool at 3:30 p.m. Hannah’s grandparents would have to pick her up. Ali actually used to work for the Preschool Center Ali attends now. By our second interview, she had moved onto a new job at a pain care center. Hannah is now working at an asthma and allergy center. Hannah mentioned that she has done a lot of “job hopping...Trying to figure out where I want to be.”

When asked to describe her family Hannah said, “It's a mess. I really just have my grandma and my grandpa, and it's me and Ali. Those are my main people.” She described her mom as a “main person” too, but she doesn’t rely on her. She has a step sister that lives in Arizona and a younger brother that she doesn’t communicate with. “He has high-functioning autism, so he doesn't do well with socializing, and he stays to himself.” Hannah describes one friend with whom she is close, “I have a friend that I will always be friends with. We went to school together. She has two kids, so we have our own life... We don't talk for a while, and then we reconnect, then we never stop talking. We just go right back to where we were. And her kids are Ali's age, so that's nice. She's awesome. She is my inspiration, because her mom passed away when she was really young. And whatever she's going through, you would never know. She's just always smiling, happy and positive. Her children's dad isn't involved with them, so we can relate on that. So, it's nice.”

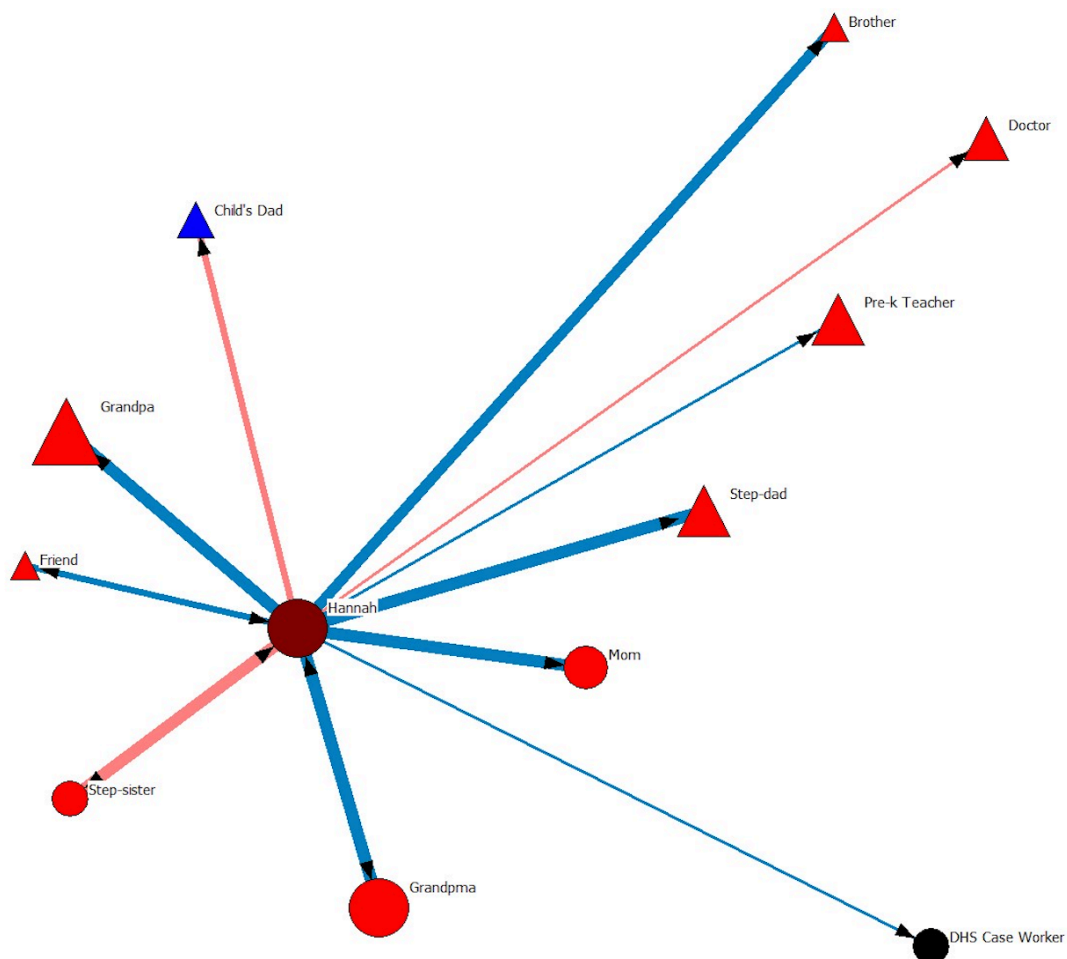
Ali is four years old and attends Preschool Center 1. She has been attending since she was 4 months old. Hannah described Ali as a “girly girl” which to her means, “ She likes everything glitter, princess, make-up... We argue about make-up right now, because she wants to do her own make-up, and she's four, obviously. So, she tried to do it without a mirror. So, that's fun.” Hannah explains that she has been a single parent since Ali was born and describes it as “rough”. When asked if Ali’s father has been involved, Hannah responded, “ With the court, yes. With her, no. He doesn't live in the area. He lives in Georgia. He just up and left without telling anybody. This year.” This is something Hannah says she is “dealing with”. She's [Ali] getting to the age where she and her friends talk about their dad, and she's like, "My dad doesn't live here." And then she'll come home and ask about him, and I'm just like, "What do I say? I don't really know how to approach that quite yet." Hannah shared an example:

She’s just is wondering where her father is. Last night, I thought we had gotten past it, but then, last night, she was like, "Is my dad coming today, or tomorrow?" ...I don't say anything. If I can find something to say really quick to get her mind off it, I do. Or I will just say, "I'm not sure." Because I don't know how to answer. I don't want to give her any wrong answers or talk down on Ali's dad right now, because I want Ali to form her own opinion. Because my own real dad wasn't around, and my parents thought horribly of him, so I didn't really get the chance to form my own opinion. I was just thinking, "He's a bad person." I want her to be able to do that on her own, even though I obviously feel certain ways about him. But I don't ever talk badly about him around her. My mom does. She really does not like him. I don't either. But she'll talk about it in front of Ali, and I can't do that.

Hannah’s Informal Ego Network.

Hannah has 11 people in her network. Here network does exhibit homophily in the areas of gender and race being 65% percent female and 82% white. The age of her alters spans considerably beginning with the age of 20 and going through the age of 72. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied as well ranging from Business, to Education to Healthcare Practitioners and support to Production Occupations with 2 people being unemployed. Hannah also had very regular contact with 64% of her network in daily or weekly communication; however she only had three people within whom she has a reciprocal relationship. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is fairly split with 5 of her relationships being less than 11 years and 6 of her relationships being more than 20 years.

Figure 5 Hannah's Informal Ego Network



Key - Node: *Triangle-Male; Circle-Female; Node - Bigger the Size the more years of age;*
Color - Black for Unknown, Brown for Black/African American, Blue for two or more races, Red for Caucasian, Green for “Mexican”, Purple for Italian, Yellow for German, Grey for Peruvian; **Lines:** Longer the line the less frequent the interactions; thicker the line the longer period of time of relationships; blue for lives in Battle Creek and pink for other; and **Arrows:** denote direction of relationship.

When asked if she felt like she was getting the support she needed from her network, Hannah said “It depends on what I'm going through. Yes...It's like yes and no, because I know that I could have called my grandparents, but I don't like to bother them if it's not an emergency type of thing.” She continues on that she has trouble asking for help. “I don't like asking for help. I have always just struggled with that, because I have been on my own since I was 18, so I don't really want to ask for help.” “My parents struggled, and they have reached out for help from my grandparents, and I don't want to be like that. I try not to ask for help, unless it's an emergency, like, "Oh my gosh, my pay date is not until next week, and my rent is due in three days. Can somebody help me with whatever I'm short on? I'm saved up for this much, but I'm short \$100. Can somebody help me?" Hannah goes on to share, “Well, I honestly had to seek my own help. Basically, my family was like, ‘You got yourself in this situation, so you can figure it out.’ Our family is weird. I don't know. They're different. My mom and dad are weird people.”

Hannah shared that she doesn't have a babysitter. “ I think trusting people is hard, so that's why I don't have a babysitter. I do babysit for other people, and I take Ali, which they want me to. It makes it nice.” She would like additional support with help to get extra sleep, financially, and some mental and physical support. “It would be nice if I had somebody to let me sleep. I need rest. She woke up this morning at 2:45, and was ready for the day. Yeah. I wasn't ready for the day. But here I am, and I have to be at work until 7:00. And who knows? “I want to say financially. Like I said, I have been doing it so long, that I have established a budget almost.”

And now, I have a good-paying job, in which I make decent money, so I'm not really penny-pinching. I've got to scrounge up some change to get gas. And so, I don't know. Like I said, if I had somebody else, I feel like it would almost be awkward asking them for help.”

Hannah shares that she does get a lot of help from her grandparents, “She [Ali] goes to my grandparents' every Sunday, so they have a visitation, and they've been like that since she was born. So, she's accustomed to that. Every Sunday, she'll go there for six to eight hours, and have dinner with them.” Her grandparents also pick Ali up from preschool on the nights that Hannah has to work late.

Case 4 – Natalie, Ariel and Lindy

Natalie is a 33-year-old single-mom with two daughters Ariel, 4 and Lindy, 2. Natalie’s income is below 100% poverty, she identifies as white and her daughters as “white/black”. Natalie is a stay-at-home mom. When asked to describe herself Natalie says, “I am a single mom. I don't work. There's not much. I don't know what else to say about myself.” In specifically describing her family of three Natalie said, “We are very loving. Of course, any mother would probably do anything for the kids, but they're my little princesses. They're very beautiful, and sometimes, it scares me too, because I just know how that is.” The things the three of them like to do together include:

Well, she [Ariel] likes watching TV, and recently, there was a kid YouTube thing, and there are activities on there that she watches. It has something kind of like science experiments that kids do, and then, she likes to watch the princess movies or shows, or do make-up. Little kids do make-up on YouTube, and they dress up like a princess. I have bought them both make-up, and they make a mess, but I let them do it, so they can do each other's make-up. They have lots of toys. I try to keep Ariel into practicing her

writing, so that's mainly what we do when we go home. Sometimes, we just go to visit our family, too, because she doesn't like to stay at home. She likes to be on the go... I take her to different parks. There was one on Riverside I was taking her to a lot, and then I read in the paper that some guy tried to grab a woman, so I stopped going there. But she has a little scooter she likes to ride. Lindy has a little bike thing that she scoots along on. I took her to a waterpark that she loved – an indoor waterpark.

Natalie also shared that Ariel likes to play outside, and that she tried to be a “mini mommy” to her little sister. She goes on to share that, “she knows how to spell her name. I know it is kind of early, but I try to teach her math, just so she knows what the gist of it is. She likes to do stuff like that. She is a hyper girl, so she is always on the go. She likes to visit her family. She is very loving. She likes to create sculptures. One time, she had some paper towel that I gave her to wipe her hands, and she made a little thing, and it looked like a bow. She was like, "Here, mom. I made this." It looked exactly like a bow.

When asked what makes her family unique Natalie described her mother and father. “Well, my mom and dad were always into animals growing up. My dad likes exotic animals, like reptiles. He has snakes and spiders, and weird stuff. Yeah. When I was growing up, we had monkeys, and they're called Capuchin monkeys. I think it's the drummer monkey that they call a Capuchin monkey.”

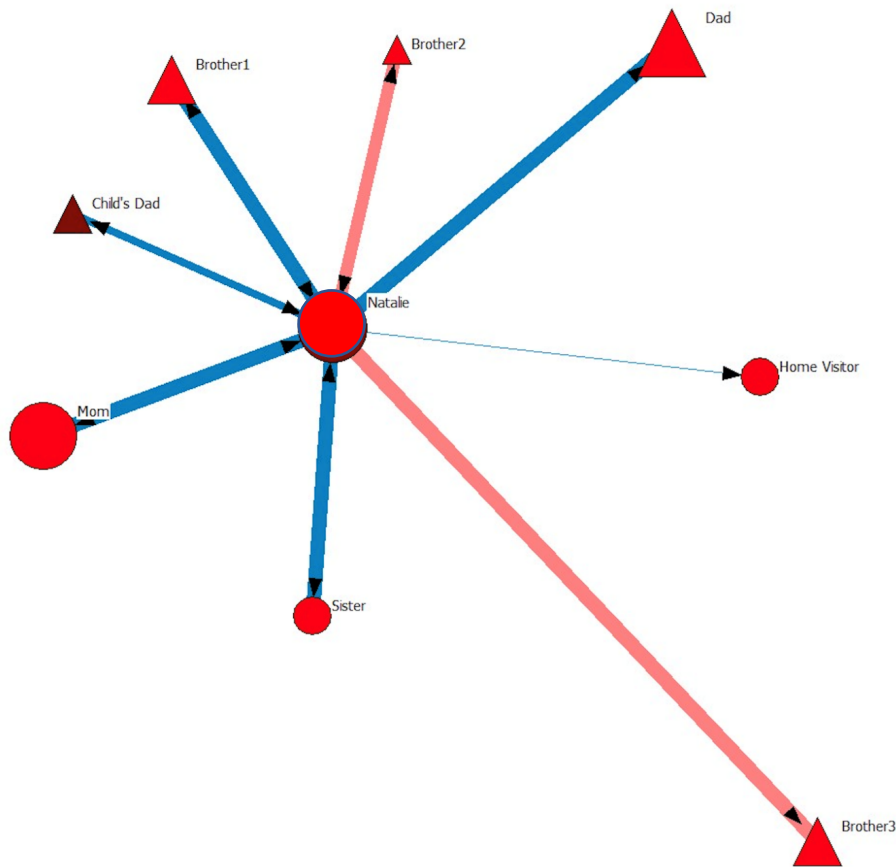
Ariel started school this year and it is her first time being away from home. Right now Lindy is home with Natalie and they have a home visitor that comes once a week and works with Lindy. Natalie tried to sign Lindy up for preschool but she wasn't eligible so they offered the home visiting instead.

Natalie also likes to take her children to playgroups but faces the barrier of gas money. “ I would say just taking them to play groups, like the last one I couldn't take Lindy to, because I had to save my gas to take Ariel to school. It's stuff like that. I mean, there is some stuff during different times of the year that you could go to if you had money.”

Natalie's Informal Ego Network.

Natalie has a network of 8 people, the majority (7) of whom are family members. Her network tends to be more male dominated with nearly 63% male, consisting of her three brothers, father and the father of her children. There is little diversity in race/ethnicity with 7 people identified as White and one person Black/African American. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied with 2 people in Management Occupations; 2 people in Sales and Related Occupations, and a range of others including Protective Services and Community and Social Services – one person is unemployed. Natalie also had very regular contact with 88% of her network in daily or weekly communication. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is weighted toward more longer relationships with 75% being more than 25 years.

Figure 6 Natalie's Informal Ego Network



Key - Node: Triangle-Male; Circle-Female; Node - Bigger the Size the more years of age; Color - Black for Unknown, Brown for Black/African American, Blue for two or more races, Red for Caucasian, Green for “Mexican”, Purple for Italian, Yellow for German, Grey for Peruvian; **Lines:** Longer the line the less frequent the interactions; thicker the line the longer period of time of relationships; blue for lives in Battle Creek and pink for other; and **Arrows:** denote direction of relationship.

When asked if Natalie thought she got the support she needed from her network she responded, “As much as they can give, yea, but not all of the time, because they got their own things going on too. So, I don’t try to bring things to them to add to their pressure.” When asked what type of support she might need that she is not getting, Natalie wasn’t sure. She expressed concern again regarding not wanting people to feel pressure to help. “...but if I need money, I wouldn't want them to bend over backwards. I wouldn't want to have to do that.”

She said she guessed if she really needed money she hoped they might have it but many times they might not. Natalie mentions that when someone in the family has a need they try to come together to support each other. This includes her mom and her brothers and sometimes her sister. Natalie shared that since the second interview her dad has gone through a lot and had to be admitted to a long-term care hospital. Natalie shared that her dad being in poor health has been very stressful. Natalie goes to her mom, sister and the girls dad sometimes for emotional support. In describing her relationship with the girl's father Natalie says, "Yeah, it's okay. It's the best it can be. He's a good guy. He is a good father, and I know there are a lot of fathers that are not involved in their kids' lives, and that's important to them."

Case 5 – Mara and Jack

Mara is a 30-year-old mother of three children Simon, 7, Rachel, 6 and Jack, 3. Her income is below 100% of poverty and both she and her children identify as Italian. During the first interview Mara was unemployed. By the last interview Mara had started a job at Denso manufacturing. She shared that she has been working 12-hour days. She found this job by doing an internet search of jobs available without work experience and she found Kelly Services which in turn got her connected with Denso. Mara works second shift from 3-11 p.m. and shared that she stays awake at night and sleeps in the morning.

Mara spends a lot of her time caring for her seven-year-old son who has a cognitive impairment. As a result of this, Mara explains in reference to her three-year-old, "We don't do a lot with him, really. In the morning, of course, we stay at home. I have to wake up. Then, I bring him here [Preschool Center 2] now, and after that, I have the other children. They play in the backyard. Sometimes we go to the park, but not a lot. We don't do a lot, especially with the little

one. But I can try. I can try to do more, too.” Mara explains that her three-year-old Jack, enjoys watching TV and that he really likes the movie, Minions. She goes on to explain:

He is a difficult child, in my opinion. He doesn't listen at all. We have a little problem with food. He eats only pasta. He loves cookies. Nothing else. When we were in Italy, he was eating meat, vegetables, and everything you put on the table. But when we came here, the food was different, and the time was different. And he stopped eating everything. Now he is eating only pasta, and we can say he loves sweet things. Nothing else. We have tried a little bit of outpatient therapy, but it didn't help at all. Then we stopped it...Jack likes to play outside and go to the playground. He also likes a show about robots called “My Big Friend” “ He likes TV. He likes cars. He plays with little toy cars, trucks, tractors, and everything that has wheels. I just finished potty training him. During night and day, he has done well. I have taken four days, really.

Mara was born in the United States to an American father and a German mother who worked together on a military base in Italy. When they divorced, Mara moved with her mom and sisters back to Italy. She was three years old. Until last year Mara had never met or talked to her father. Mara explains her perspective of the United States, “But the USA, I think I always wanted to come here. Italy is expensive. You can't own a house, because it's only for rich people. Here, in one year, we bought this house. It's huge. And we have a normal life pretty much there, but you feel better here. It's different. In Italy, they think America is the country of miracle. I don't know. It is not. Maybe you have more problems than Italy, but it's how the people are. They are more genuine here.”

Mara continues to explain her family:

My husband is not legal here... he is here with something like a visa, but it's shorter than an actual visa. We are getting papers for the green card and everything. He is 100 percent Italian. He is from Naples. It is in southern Italy. He likes it here. I don't know. I still don't know. He is pretty chill. He loves Italy. He comes here for me, because in here, you can have a future. He's happy about the home we bought. He's happy about the kids. Maybe he's a little bit sad, because the kids are starting to speak English, and he doesn't understand them. He's learning, but because you are an adult, maybe you take more time. It's more difficult for him. Then this is the only thing he is not really happy about. He is not working because he can't work. We have this paper going on that we have to wait for. I don't know how much. Maybe one month, one year, and then he's not doing a lot. He doesn't like to come pick up the kids, or go to the grocery store, because then he has to interact with the people, and he is not ready yet. Then, I have my three kid and my Chihuahua. This is my family.

When asked what makes her family unique, Mara shared:

I always try to be – show - that I am perfect – show that I have a clean house, perfect kids, a perfect life – but after five minutes, if I understand the person in front of me enough, I can say we're not perfect, but I like it. My kids don't have a lot of rules. So far, in the home, or outside, they can do whatever they want. They know the living room should be safe. Of course, they don't go play in the road. In the house, they can't paint on the wall, but they can watch TV. They play a lot. Before everything, they do homework. We have basic rules, but after all, they can do everything. If they don't kill each other, then we work. We are not unique, but we work, and so far, I like it.

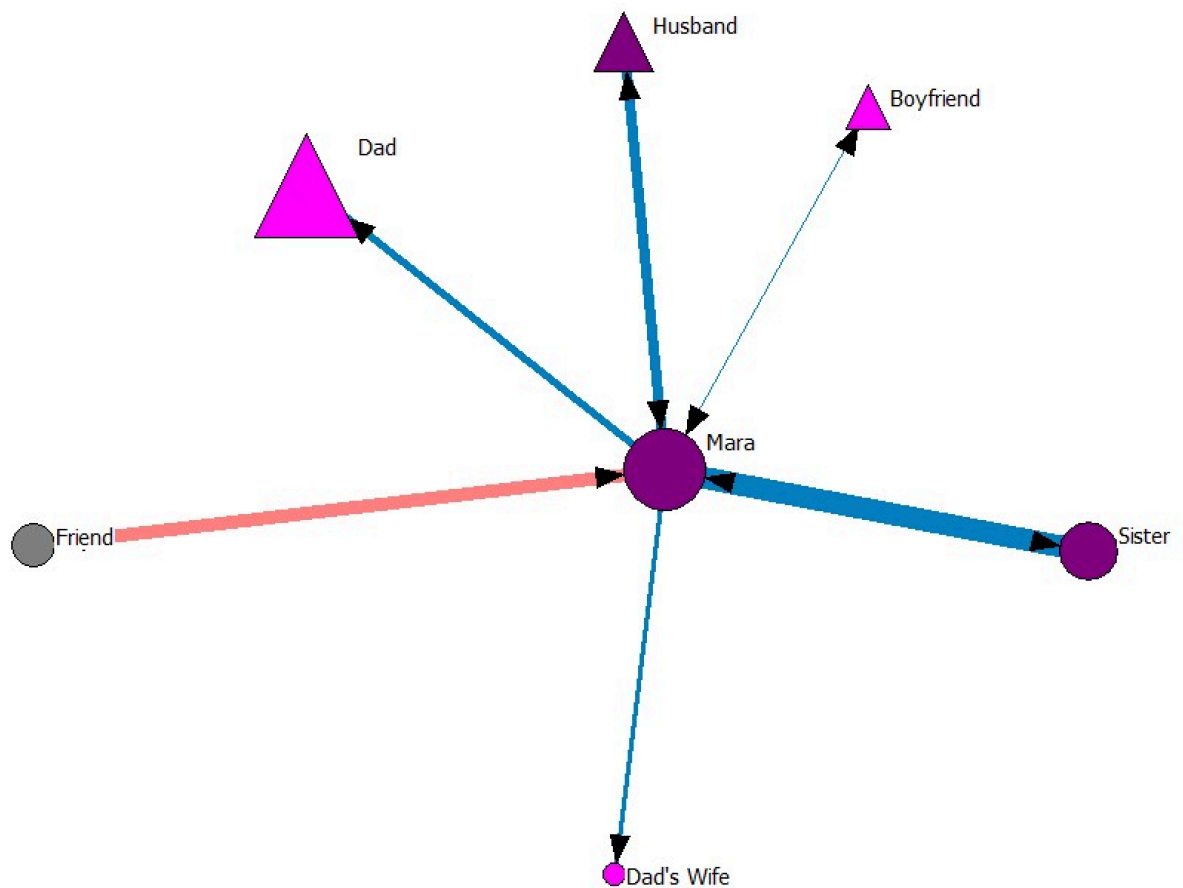
During the first interview Mara was married and living with her husband and children. By the last interview, Mara's life situation had changed dramatically. She and her husband had separated. Mara also had started a relationship with a boyfriend and had just found out she was pregnant. Mara moved into an apartment near Denso and found a roommate on Facebook. We spent much of the third interview discussing the major changes in Mara's life. Her ex-husband moved back to Italy with their three children. Mara reflected on this difficult situation sharing, "the relationship to mom and kid and father and kid is different. I want my kids of course, but for different reasons we decided he is going to keep them. For me it is pretty ok. The only thing I want is to see them. It's hard but at the same time I think it is the best." The plan is that she will see the kids in the summer and she had been calling them every night. She shared this has been "worse than what I thought". She is no longer sure if she will stay in Battle Creek. She was pretty flustered by the situation when we met because it was all so new. She was planning to talk with her sister about the situation. She shared that she typically tries to figure things out by herself but that this situation was different and she needed some help. She was planning to go see Grace Health.

Mara's Ego Network.

Mara has a network of six people. When asked for other friends or relatives she would like to include Mara said "nope." Five of the six people are family members and one is a life-long friend who lives in Italy. Her network is diverse in terms of race, gender and age with 50% being White, 33% Italian, and 17% Peruvian; 50% male and 50% female; and ages ranging from 24 to 60s. Five people in her network live in Battle Creek (at the time of this question her husband was still in Battle Creek) and one person lives in Italy. Of the six people only two are employed, her sister in Sales and Related Occupations and her Boyfriend in Food Preparation

and Serving Related Occupations. Mara is in very regular contact with her entire network in daily or weekly communication. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is mixed with half of her network in relationships below 4 years, two people in the middle range of 10-20 years and one person she has been in contact with nearly her whole life. Mara did mention her mother and one additional sister, but they are not included in her personal network because they are no longer a part of her life and they are not in communication. When asked if she felt like she was getting the support she needed from her Informal Network, Mara shared that she needs more help for herself, especially in her current situation.

Figure 7 Mara's Informal Ego Network



Key - Node: Triangle-Male; Circle-Female; Node - Bigger the Size the more years of age; Color - Black for Unknown, Brown for Black/African American, Blue for two or more races, Red for Caucasian, Green for “Mexican”, Purple for Italian, Yellow for German, Grey for Peruvian;

Lines: Longer the line the less frequent the interactions; thicker the line the longer period of time of relationships; blue for lives in Battle Creek and pink for other; and **Arrows:** denote direction of relationship.

Case 6 – Jamila and Karl

Jamila is a 32-year-old mother of three children, two daughters 13 and 10 and one son, Karl, 4. During our first interview Jamila shared that she was engaged to Karl's father and by the last interview they were married. Jamila lives below 250% of poverty and identified as Black/African American. Her children are also African American. Jamila is a preschool teacher. To someone who doesn't know her, Jamila would describe herself as follows, "Well, I take a lot of time to open up, I guess. I am a very goofy person. Before anybody hears one side of me, I prefer to explore things a little bit more before I show that side of me. I plan weddings. I am actually getting married in May." She describes her family as "...less traditional. We are actually a blended family". Her fiancé has two other sons – one that is seven and one that is four. They've moved in together and have been together for the last six years. Karl and his two sisters live with Jamila and her Fiancé, and his sons live with them part time. The girls go to their dad's house on the weekend and in the summer they rotate weeks.

Jamila shares:

We like to do family movie nights on the weekends, because we work so much on the weekdays. They are all into sports. My oldest daughter is in volleyball. My younger daughter is playing soccer right now. My fiancé's oldest son is playing football, and then, his four-year-old son is playing soccer. We are put in every direction throughout the week, so we try to make that time on the weekends with a stay-at-home family night, or I would go out to movies or something like that...When we are out, we get compliments, like, "Oh, you guys look so good together. This is a nice-looking family." We get compliments everywhere we go. I don't know if they're shy, or if they show if they are

happy, or what, but people compliment about our family all the time. With the girls, we get compliments about them being really well-behaved, and the boys are on the rough side. We may get some stares every now and then. But for the most part, we get compliments about the family.

The kids attend four different schools in two different school districts. Jamila gets up at 5:45 and tries to leave by house by 6:45 and drops Karl and her Fiancé's son at her sisters, her Fiancé's other son at his daycare and then takes her daughters to the bus stop by their dad's house. Upon reflecting on what she's just shared Jamila says, "Saying it out loud, it's like, 'Oh my goodness! This is so much!' It's so hard" But Jamila says her sister helps a lot in the morning.

Jamila describes Karl, "He's such a boy. He's so busy. He loves basketball. We have a basketball room in the house, so he likes doing that. He really just enjoys running and flipping around, and just about any boyish activities." " He likes to sort colors. What I did was just have construction paper, and I cut out squares of the red, yellow, blue, and orange, and we have these sorting bears, and he puts the bear on the color that we have got cut out. He likes watching TV, and he likes to cuddle with me a lot, and when I read him books, and stuff like that – anything where we can just be close together, where I'm right by him." She also shares that he likes to eat – whatever she cooks he eats.

Jamila's Ego Network.

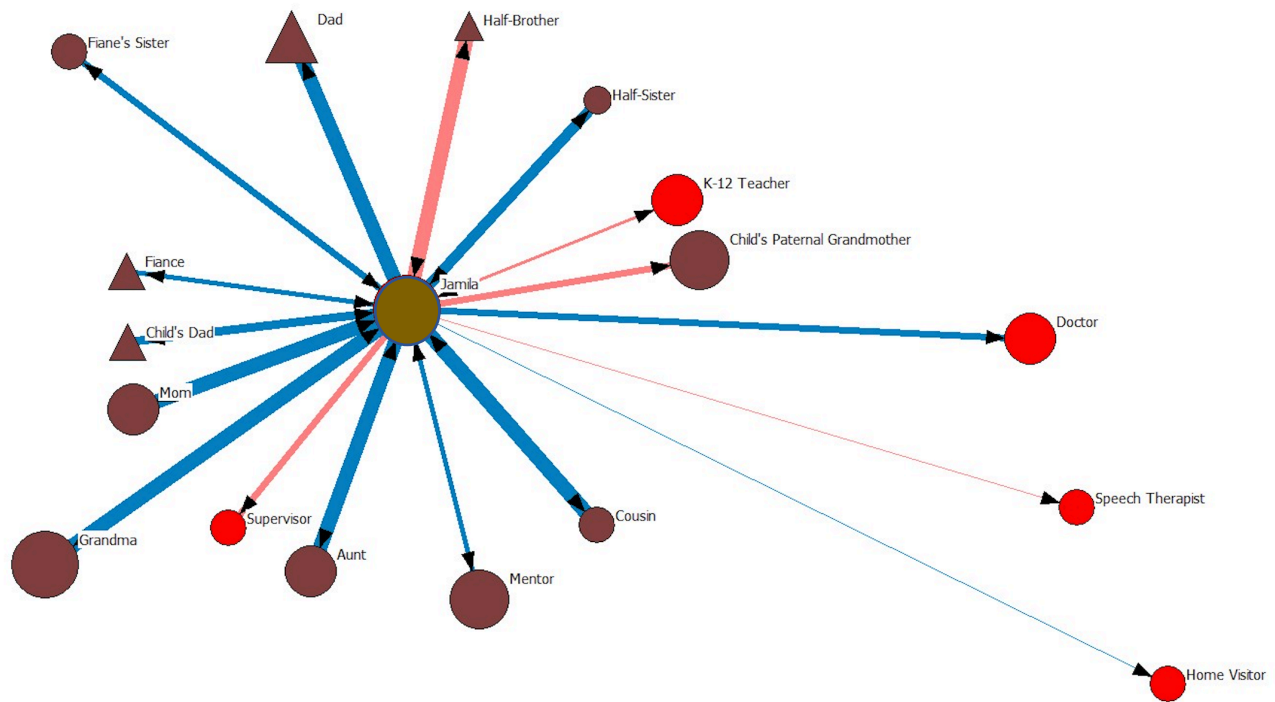
Jamila has a network of 17 people. Her network tends to exhibit homophily based on race, gender, age, geographic location, and relationships with 71% Black/African American; 76% female; 53% between the ages of 20 and 40; 71% living in Battle Creek and 65% family members. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied with 2 people in Management

Occupations, 3 people in Educational Instruction and Library Occupations; 2 people in Healthcare Support Occupations; and 4 people in Production Occupations. Jamila also has very regular contact with 64% of her network in daily or weekly communication. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is fairly spread out with about a third less than 10 years, a third between 10-20 and a third between 20-30.

Jamila wishes that she had more support from her networks, but notes that for the most part she thinks everybody does really good, explaining:

I think everybody does really good. I always have my complaints. You could take the kids more - The kids need to get to know you a little more. But other than that, no. I had the kids I need to take care of them, so I'm hard on myself, but I wish that a couple of them would be more supportive, like my dad, mainly. When my brother comes here, he gets the kids, takes them to the park, or out to eat, or anything, so it's just to spend time with them. I just wish I got something from my dad a little more, but he's just so busy. He works. He's older, and he's working in a factory, and he's working third shift. You are a grandpa. My grandma had us every weekend. She took us to church every Sunday. She kept us for summer vacations and stuff like that. I'm just not used to grandparents being the way my parents are right now.

Figure 8 Jamila's Informal Ego Network



Key - Node: Triangle-Male; Circle-Female; Node - Bigger the Size the more years of age; Color - Black for Unknown, Brown for Black/African American, Blue for two or more races, Red for Caucasian, Green for “Mexican”, Purple for Italian, Yellow for German, Grey for Peruvian; **Lines:** Longer the line the less frequent the interactions; thicker the line the longer period of time of relationships; blue for lives in Battle Creek and pink for other; and **Arrows:** denote direction of relationship.

Jamila goes on to talk about the role her grandparents played in her life when she was younger, “She used to take us to Florida every summer. She took us to Disney World. And my other grandma did too. This one is my dad's grandmother that I'm talking about right now. But about my mom's mom, we used to spend whole summers at her house. I'm just so used to grandparents keeping grandchildren. I don't know what's going on. I don't know. And they're not any younger than their parents were when they had us. When asked why she thinks it is different these days she said she think it's different times. Jamila shared more about her mom's situation, “Like my mom, I was blaming her boyfriend. But my dad has really no excuse. He's in the same

condition my grandma was in, and she worked third shift. She worked at Kellogg's, not Post, but that's the same thing. She was not retired or anything. She had a husband. He has a wife. All the kids are out in college. My sister, my dad, and me, and my brother, so it was just them two there. I really don't know. I think it's because of the times, honestly.” Jamila’s mom has been dating her boyfriend since Jamila was in high school. “...(T)hat's the reason I left at 16 years old, because she had a situation. Every time she would get mad at him, she would take it out on us. She kicked me out one time, and I never came back. I was 16, and I got pregnant with my daughter when I was 17 years old. And I just never went back, and she stopped talking to me, lost contact, and her boyfriend went to jail. And I don't know. Maybe two years before he got out, he reached back out to her, and she has supported him ever since.”

Case 7 – Candice and Aniyah

Candice is a mother of four children a boy who is 7 and three girls 13, 12 and 4. She is married to the father of her four-year-old, Aniyah, but they are not living together right now. Her income is below 100% of poverty. Candice identifies as white and identified her children as “bi-racial.” During our first interview Candice was employed at a dentist office. She explains, “In the last couple of months, it has been really bad. The turnover has been really bad...” During the last interview Candice shared that she went back to working at a doctor’s office she has worked at previously, while she was pregnant with Aniyah. “Well, I was really unhappy. And so, I just finally had enough. I told them, "If you guys don't get it together, I'm leaving." It changed for a day. It went right back, and I said, "I'm done with this! I'm not going to keep dealing with this!" So, I had seen an ad in the paper that they were hiring, and I called, and I got the job.” Her hours are better but the pay isn’t quite enough. “No. I mean, it's only three to four days a week. It's supposed to be on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and some Thursdays, so it's not really enough

financially, but at the same time, it is good, because my mom is getting to the point where she doesn't want to help anymore. She doesn't want to take my kids to school, and it's really stressing me out. If I'm not at work as much, then I can take them to school.” Since Candice is only working three to four days a week she started doing deliveries for Door Dash and said that she made \$380 in one week.

When asked to describe her family Candice says one word “Chaotic”. When asked to explain Candice said, “There's four of them. They are very busy. And this year, it has calmed down a little bit, because I needed a break. Last year, my oldest was in two dance classes. She did track, she does orchestra, she did cooking club, she was doing band and roller derby. [The second oldest] plays soccer. I try to keep them in things, but it's very busy.” The older three children go to two different school districts which adds to the busyness. Candice describes her daughter saying, “She likes babies. She likes to play. She likes to boss people around. She is something different. She really is. She repeats the same thing a million times. She just has this fierce disposition. She is not afraid of anything. I think she is one of those really strong-willed people.”

In describing herself, Candice explains the difficult couple of years that she has had, “...I have been through a lot in the last five years. I had her [Aniyah], and after I had her, I got my tubes tied. I was not going to have any more. I had her by Caesarian section, which I had before, and I had a spinal headache afterwards, so that took me a week and a half to even get out of bed. I lost a lot of weight. It was really bad. And then, I had my tubes tied. And then, I found out I had cervical cancer, so I went through a hysterectomy, had a blood clot, went through chemotherapy and radiation, because it had spread through a lymph node. That was quite a bit. My husband has a son as well, but he only has him here and there. At the time, it was like having five kids, and

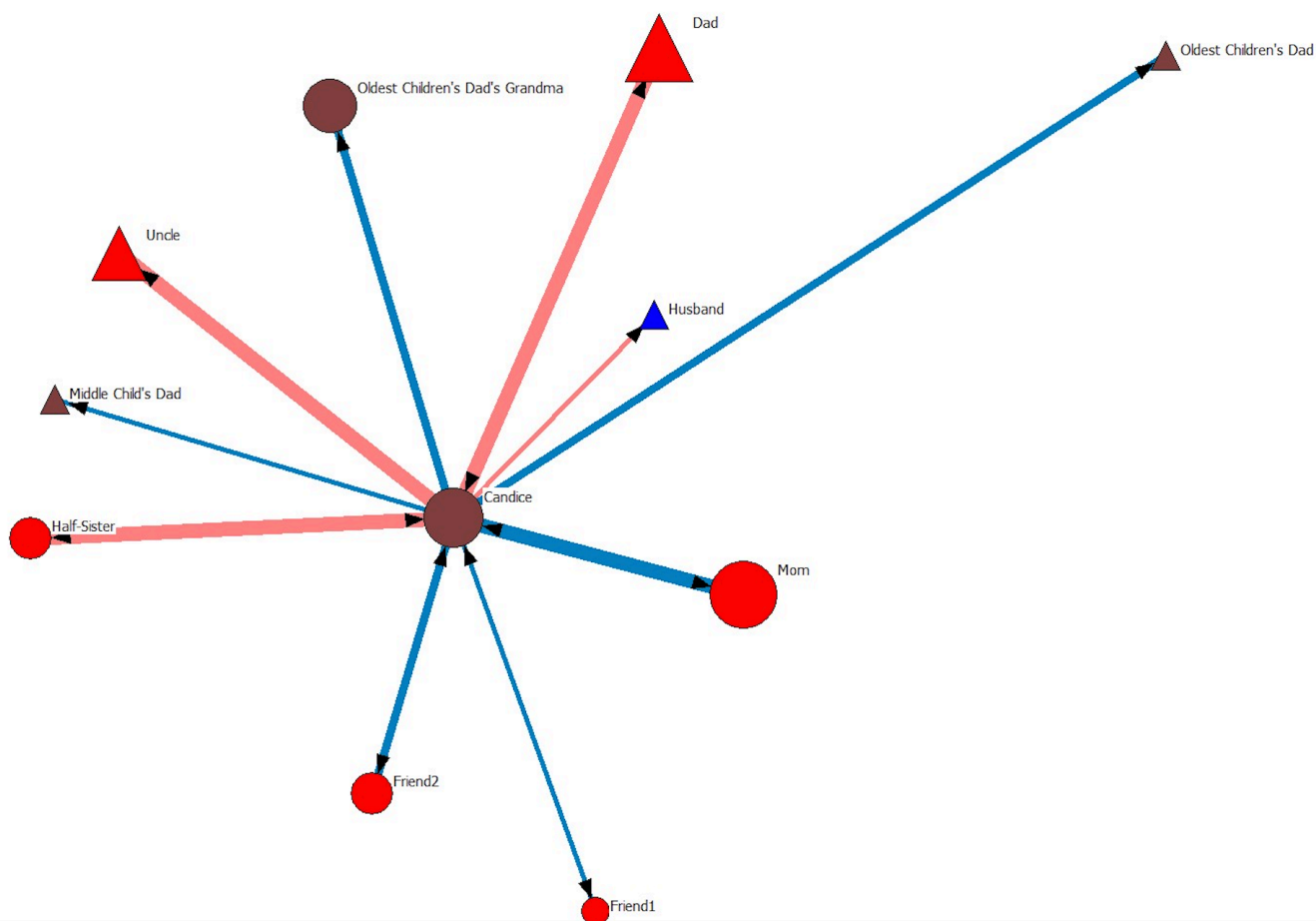
my husband works second shift. I had a newborn baby. I was going through treatments. It was really bad. And then, since then, I was put through menopause, I suffered through depression and anxiety, I didn't work, and he tried to take care of the family. It was hard, because of all these unfortunate events. It's just been really, really rough.” Candice explained that she tried a few times to get counseling but she didn't have the means – transportation or time.

Candice's Informal Ego Network.

Candice has a network of 10 people. Her network is diverse in terms of age, gender, race, and length of time in the relationship and geographic location. The age ranges from 30 to 70 with 4 of her relationships being 30-40 years old. There are 50% female and 50% male in her network and the 60% White, 30% Black/African American and 10% two or more races. The length of time of Candice's relationships ranges as well about a third being 5-9 years; a third being 15-19 years and a third being 30-34 years. Sixty percent of her network lives in Battle Creek and 80% of her network is family. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied ranging from Business and Financial Operations to Educational Instruction to Health Care, Sales and Production Occupations with three people in that category and two people unemployed. Candice also had very regular contact with 80% of her network in daily or weekly communication. When asked if Candice felt like she was getting the support she needed from her Informal Network, she said “Looks like a lot on paper, but it's not.” I really only have my mom and my sister. “I mean, it looks like a lot there, but it's really not. I mean, I feel like I don't have the support system that a lot of other people have. I literally have [husband], who has his own mess of a life, which makes it hard to help me when he has his. My mom – I mean, Nana – is not a bad person by any means. She just works all the time, and she helps financially if I need her to, but she's not available like, "Hey, can you pick my kids up from school?"

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Figure 9 Candice’s Informal Ego Network



Candice mentions that she has family that lives out of state which isn't very helpful. "I feel like that's not really a network". When asked if she is getting the support she needs she says, "Oh, definitely not". She wishes she had more family around. "It would make me less stressed if I had somebody who could happily take my kids to school for me. It's not like I'm

saying, "Hey, can you take my kids to school?" Not because I want to sleep or be lazy. It's because I have to be at work." Areas where Candice would like more support include, "The things I mentioned – the transportation, house, job, and income. Just many more types of support. I don't have much, I feel like. Just financial support and emotional support. My mom is a good grandma, but she doesn't do well with kids screaming and crying, but they also know that they can get what they want, especially this one. She gets very irritated very quickly... Sometimes, I think it would be nice if I could put myself first, because I never do that. I don't want to say I'm bad at that, but I am. I never buy myself anything, except for coffee. But there are things that I need to do, and I don't. People are always saying, "You need this, and you need this."

Candice's ideal situation would be:

... a better-paying job with better hours, so that I could be home more. I would want to make enough money to pay for the bills, but be home more than what I am. And then, our house is pretty small. We live in a two-story, four-bedroom home, but they are small bedrooms. And she [Aniyah] doesn't have a room. She actually sleeps between me and her sister. We are going to transition her into her sister's room, but still, the rooms are really small. I would need a bigger house. Probably better, more dependable transportation. I have a car, but every time I buy a car, it seems like I touch it, and it breaks. It just seems to keep happening. We have had times when we haven't had a car, and it's very stressful. We either try to make it until tax time. I usually make it until then, or a couple months before that, and then I buy another car every tax season. It's very frustrating. The car I have now, my dad gave me a month and a half ago. He came here from Oklahoma, and just gave it to me, because he knew I had been without a car for a few months, because the other one just fell apart. I thought the brakes were bad on that, but

supposedly, it's the rear end, which was \$1,000 to have repaired. I'm back in the same level. I can drive it now, but I don't know how long it's going to last.”

Candice’s husband doesn’t have a car so he gets rides to work. He also takes the bus sometimes. Candice says her mom is pretty helpful regarding transportation.

During the last interview, Candice shared that her husband is no longer working. They were taking a lot of money from him for child support. So Candice says, “He wants to try this working from home type of stupid stuff, I guess. I don't feel like that's a thing. People work from home all over the world, but it's not playing the lottery or gaming, or whatever. Yeah. I understand. He doesn't want to go to work and have all his money taken for child support or insurance, or any of that, and I understand. Nobody wants to be broke. But you chose to have kids. You have to pay these things like 90 percent of America. So now, I'm not getting child support from him, which was really helping me.” Candice goes on to share, “There are times when I don't want to be with him, because our relationship is just stupid sometimes. But I just can't not have that help. And a lot of people don't understand it. My sister doesn't understand it, because she doesn't live it. But for now, it is what it is. It helps and it works”

Comparison of Family Overviews

The family overviews of each woman don’t align perfectly because my intent was to not guide their description, but let them share how they wanted to describe their families. In a sense, how they choose to describe their family is instructive. For example, Emily, Jamila and Candice primarily described their most immediate family – children and significant others –while Jai’lysa, Natalie, Mara, and Hannah shared more about their extended family members. Several of the women used very specific words to describe their family such as: Hannah, “hot mess”; Candice, “chaotic”; and Jamila, “less traditional”. Some of the women went into more detail

than others when describing their children and their likes and dislikes. Mara was the only mother who shared that she had a child with special needs. This was one of the first questions that was asked, as somewhat of a warm-up question, and to an extent the level of the detail in the responses seemed to reflect how quickly each individual woman seemed to feel comfortable opening up and sharing more detail about themselves and their children.

In describing themselves, Jai'lysa and Candice both noted struggling with some anxiety and/or depression. This was actually a common theme that emerged with over half of the mothers sharing that they had dealt with some type of anxiety either prior to becoming pregnant, while pregnant or after having their child. While all women reached out for some help initially, Jai'lysa was the only woman who continued with the support and found it somewhat helpful. Candice noted the barrier of time and transportation preventing her from seeking continued help, while others described the experience as not helpful or something they were not interested in continuing.

While the primary purpose of the interviews was to learn more about the Informal Network of each woman as well as her interaction with the Formal Network, there were several questions we discussed as an introduction that contributed to the overall story of each family. Since all of the women in the study were recruited through their child's preschool, they all had experiences to share about how they learned of the preschool opportunity. Additionally, during the course of our conversations, the women were all asked about their reflections on being a parent, their aspirations for their child and their experiences living in Battle Creek. These questions all provided relevant context as we moved into more specific discussions regarding their networks. Following is a summary across cases.

Getting connected to preschool

Overall, the women described their experiences getting their child enrolled in preschool as positive and having the support they needed to get everything in place. Many women had a particular person or persons who were particularly supportive. For example, Jai'lysa mentioned a caseworker that helped her get everything in place and navigate the paperwork, Emily mentioned a preschool director and Hannah mentioned a teacher within the center. Jai'lysa, Mara and Natalie all started their search for a preschool online and Candice eventually went to the internet after being pointed there through a radio advertisement. Emily, Jamila and Hannah has more personal connections, with Emily being referred through word of mouth and Hannah and Jamila both having prior experience working at preschools. Jamila had a notable story because her mother was also a preschool teacher and had supported Jamila in her interest in working with children so she had a family history of involvement.

Beyond learning about preschool options for their children, the reasons for selecting a particular center varied for the women ranging from liking the “school like” setting, curriculum and accreditations, to feeling welcome and safe. Several of the women brought up the cost of childcare, however it was primarily regarding finding care outside of the designated preschool hours because all of the children were enrolled in publicly funded preschool programs. Jai'lysa shared, “But back then, I wasn't really making good money, so I was like, ‘But how am I going to pay for it? Because daycare here is \$178 a week.’ And . . ., the director back then, referred me to DHS, and I just had some paperwork to fill out, and I gave it to them. And they set me up for daycare through here.”

Reflections on experience as a parent

When reflecting on their experiences as a parent, all of the women expressed pride/joy in knowing that they were playing such an important role in the lives of their child/children. Emily shared, “I would definitely say just the joy that these two kids look to me for everything, like I'm their whole world, being a single parent.” Jai'lysa shared a similar sentiment, “What I like about being a parent is it makes me feel good to know that I am raising a little person. I can't really explain it. It just feels good to know that I'm raising him.” Again, along the same lines Mara shared, “When you wake up, you have your kids. You are doing something for the kids. You stand up from the bed for your kids. They make me crazy. They are my little devils. But without them, it's not the same...Without them, it is not life for me.” Jamila gets joy from the things she is able to teach Karl saying, “Just when he masters certain skills that I try to teach him, like when he starts doing the things himself, I just feel like I'm doing a good job.”

There were some key challenges the women noted in raising their child/children such as the expense, patience and time. Emily shared, “I know everyone says that kids are so expensive, but you don't think about it until you get into it...” Hannah also found the expenses of being a parent challenging. “...especially being a single mom with one income. And I don't get a lot of help from the state. It's not that I expect a lot of help, but I get frustrated, because I feel like the people that need it the most are the ones that don't get it. And then, the ones that don't really need it get all of it. I make too much, so I get cut off. So, I guess I have to not work to be able to get help. So, it's either don't work, and I don't have food, and I just pay my bills, or I work, and I pay my bills, and I hardly get help.”

Several women were proud of the patience they had developed while others shared the amount of patience necessary was surprising. Candice shared that a challenge was figuring out

the discipline, somewhat related to patience, “I hate being the bad guy. And it's really hard to find that balance, because I know I don't want them to run all over me, but I also don't want them to hate me.” Something that was unexpected for Jamila was the time of being a parent. She laughed a bit as she shared, “It's always a smack in the face about how much time I actually have on my hands before babies. Before I had my first child, I was like, ‘Oh my goodness, I have no time on my hands... I had so much time to myself.’ And then, I thought that was bad. And then I had my second daughter, and I was thinking, “Oh my goodness, what was I thinking? I have no time to myself!” And then, I had Karl, and I was like, “What was I thinking?” I get all these smacks in the face.”

Several women also expressed concerns for their child’s safety, specifically Hannah and Natalie. Natalie shared, “The only thing I have felt is how nervous I was to bring her into places of people I don't know – just how this world is. I can't trust anyone, really. And yeah, I know she would tell me if someone tried to hurt her or anything, but that is the main thing I am nervous about.”

Living in Battle Creek

The combined story of the lives of these women in Battle Creek is a bit conflicting overall. Having family in the area tended to be a strong motivation for most of the women to stay in the area but there were not many positive things said about the community. The interview with Emily was very reflective of this, according to Emily, “not a whole lot” has kept her in Battle Creek; however, when asked what would make Battle Creek a better place, Emily said, “I feel like they do a lot. That's the problem. I feel like Battle Creek, as a whole, has so many resources, and people just don't take the time to utilize them”. Mara and Jai’lysa both mentioned that they liked the smaller size of Battle Creek. According to Jai’lysa, “It's small. Everyone

knows everybody, which can be a pro or a con, but I look at it more of as a pro, because I feel comfortable going to certain places, because I know everybody, or pretty much everybody.” She also likes the fact that Malikai will know many people in the area as he grows up which makes her feel comfortable. “What’s kept me here so long, is that I’m familiar with it.” Similar to Emily, when Jai’lysa was asked what would make Battle Creek a better place to live, Jai’lysa shared that more opportunities in the community would make it a better place to live, “I can’t even name one thing that I would want to see done, but I just think more for the community, and for the generations coming up, that we should give them more opportunities and more scholarships, and give them things that they can work towards. I know they have got to be out there, but they’re not really broadcast anywhere for people to find out about them. Any opportunity that I had, or that I found, I had to go out looking for it. So, I just wish it was more broadcast.” Hannah expressed a similar desire to seek a place with more opportunity for her child and by the third interview, Hannah had shared her plans to move to Arizona. Candice contributed to the shared narrative of wanting more opportunities saying there is “Nothing new ever.” When asked what she wishes were different she wishes there as more to do. “Just more free things, but even just more restaurants, more entertainment, and more kids’ places. My husband wants to move to Portage, but change is really hard for me. I don’t know.”

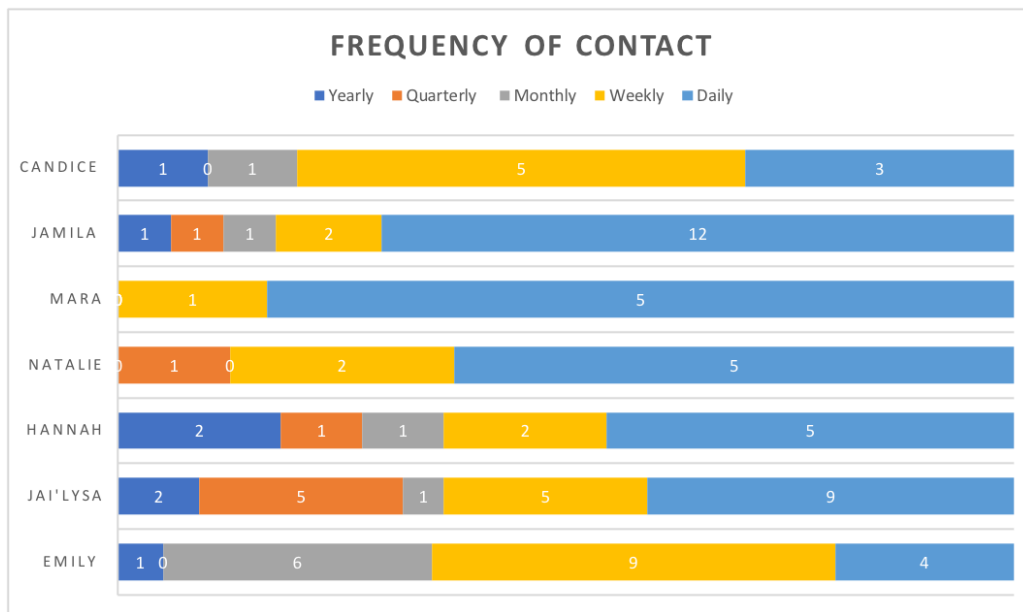
Several women mentioned concerns regarding violence and safety including Emily, Hannah and Natalie. When asked what she would change about her city, Natalie responded, “There are not good people everywhere. I would look for nicer people, nicer neighborhoods, and less violence. I wish people would be more respectful. That’s the same with the people being nicer.” Hannah shared a concerning quote but didn’t elaborate, “I feel like Battle Creek is too small of a city to have such tragic things happen.”

Mara shared an interesting perspective coming from a different country. She noted that in Battle Creek people spend a lot of time in their cars, “Now, it's everything in the car. You can stop to take a coffee in the car. You can stop at the pharmacy to take your medicine in the car. You can stop at the bank in the car. You are not going to have a relationship in the car. This is wrong. I think all this helping you to stay in the car is wrong. I enjoy a walk with the stroller, or with the kids on the bicycle. We love it. But here, it's different. I went to this store by foot in Italy. Here, we say, "Let's take the car. Why not?" It's weird. it's really weird.

Informal Ego Network Cross Case Comparison

The ego network's ranged in size, composition and support. The size of the Informal Networks ranged from 6 people for Mara to 22 people for Jai'lysa. The tables below help to show the comparisons of key characteristics across the networks including frequency of contact with those in the network (Table 4), the gender ratio of those within the network (Table 5), and the race/ethnicity percentage of those in the networks (Table 6).

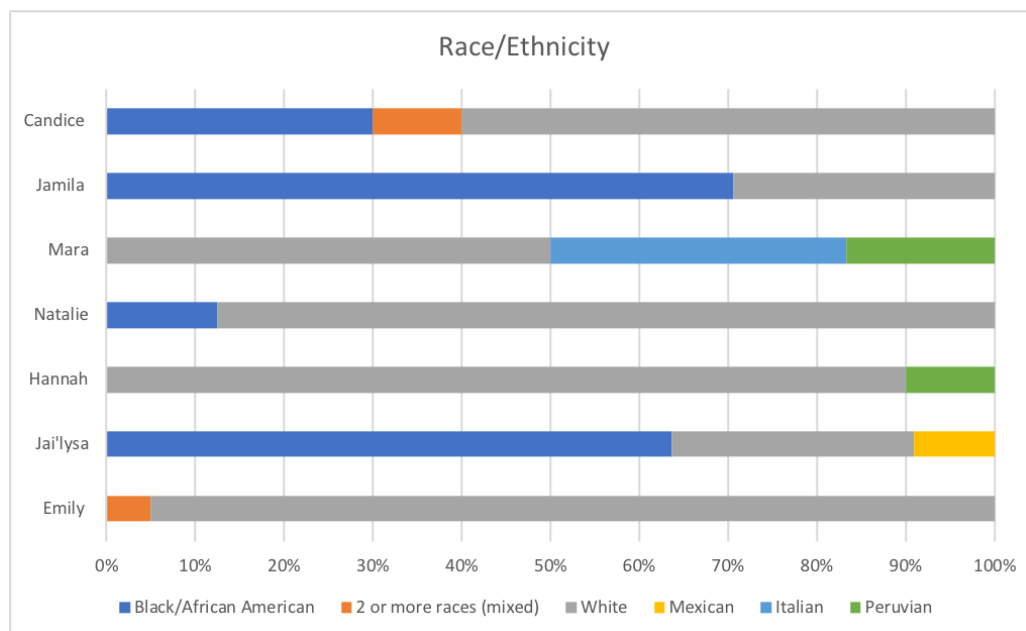
Table 3: Frequency of Contact



The numbers in the frequency of contact table represent the number of people that fall within a certain frequency category. For example, Candice is in daily communication with 3 people in her network and Jamila is in daily communication with 12 people in her network. There is also comparison below of gender and race/ethnicity within the network. These comparisons are informative to a certain extent, however there did not seem to be a clear pattern among these seven women of frequency of contact, or race/ethnicity of the network impacting

whether the woman felt like she was getting the support she needed from her network. Jamila and Jai'lysa, both African American women, had the most diverse networks and identified feeling supported by their networks; however Candice, a white woman, had the next most diverse network and responded that she did not feel supported by her network. Gender does seem to play a role as discussed later.

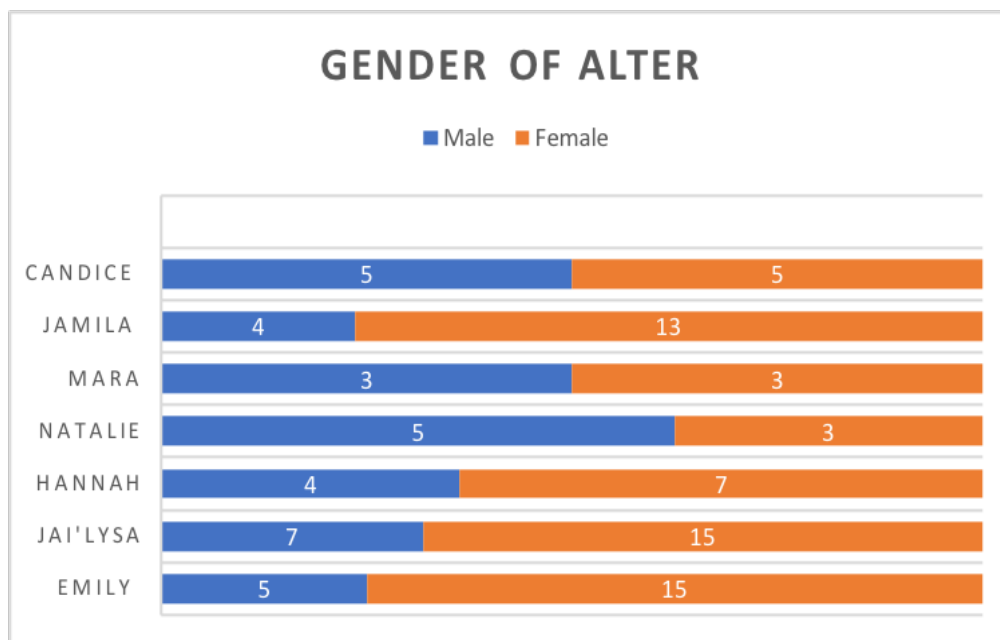
Table 4: Race/Ethnicity of Alter



The key indicator of whether a woman responded as feeling supported by her network seemed to be related to network size; however, despite size all women did report a valuable feature of their network was the emotional support they receive. Emily, network size of 20, Jamila network size of 22 and Jai'lysa, network size of 17, had the three largest networks and were the only women in the study that responded that overall they felt like they were getting the support they needed from their network. All of these women had areas for improvement with Emily noting that her children did not have contact with their father, Jai'lysa also wishing that Malikai's father and her own father were more involved, and Jamila indicating that she wished her mother, and the grandparents of her children overall were more involved. However, despite

these identified gaps, the women seemed to have adequate relationships with others in their network to help them feel supported. They also had the most female dominated networks, which according the literature, women tend to be more supportive ties. Drawing from the narrative description of these three women, they were also the only three that had stable employment during the entire 9-month interview time. The other four women were either unemployed for all or most of the 9 months or switched jobs at least once.

Table 5: Gender of Alter



Candice, Natalie, Mara and Hannah all had 11 people or less in their informal network and did not express satisfaction with the support they were receiving. Natalie was possibly the most neutral saying her network gave, “As much as they can give,” but Mara and Candice clearly stated a desire for more help. Candice shared that she wishes she had more family around: “It would make me less stressed if I had somebody who could happily take my kids to school for me. It's not like I'm saying, ‘Hey, can you take my kids to school?’ Not because I want to sleep or be lazy. It's because I have to be at work.” Area’s where Candice would like more support

include, "... the transportation, house, job, and income. Just many more types of support. I don't have much, I feel like. Just financial support and emotional support."

During the interviews, none of the women directly addressed or discussed how their race, gender, class or issues of structural inequities impacted their experiences. I recognize my choice not to ask the women to directly address race, class, gender and/or structural inequities was a limitation of the study. This choice was largely driven by my value of the need to establish the type of relationship and trust with each woman so we could discuss these very personal and delicate topics. It was also driven by the responsibility I felt to not bring any unnecessary harm to the women as a result of their participation given that when people are asked to explain a traumatic experience, they can re-experience that trauma. Additionally, part of why I chose to address this in what I felt was a sensitive and respectful manner was my recognition that I am a white woman of relative privilege asking women who are in different situations than my own, to open up and share personal information about themselves and their children. My hope was that these issues would come up unprompted, however, in hindsight I think it would have been appropriate by the final interview to ask somewhat more pointed questions in these areas. While at a personal level this approach felt right at the time, as I analyzed the data and finalized the writing of the dissertation, I recognized that the findings would be more powerful and possibly more impactful for the field if there were direct statements in the voices of the women explaining the inequities they face. However, despite these limitations, the approach I have taken and the valuable data I was still able to gather tells an important and impactful story about the experiences of these women.

The next chapter builds on the types of support and access to opportunity that the women have for their children by expanding the ego networks to include their interactions with organizations.

Chapter VI – Results from the Overarching Question

How do families engage with and experience the Formal Early Childhood Network and the functions of the individual organizations within the network?

This chapter focuses on the overall results of the study, or answering the overarching research question. The two sub-questions addressed in the previous chapters provided the relevant framing and data necessary including the make-up, structure and function of the Formal Early Childhood System and the Informal Family Networks. Now, I will turn to how families are actually entering into the Formal Early Childhood Network and how they are experiencing both the Formal network overall, and the individual organizations within. I look first at the individual experience, and then at the collective experiences.

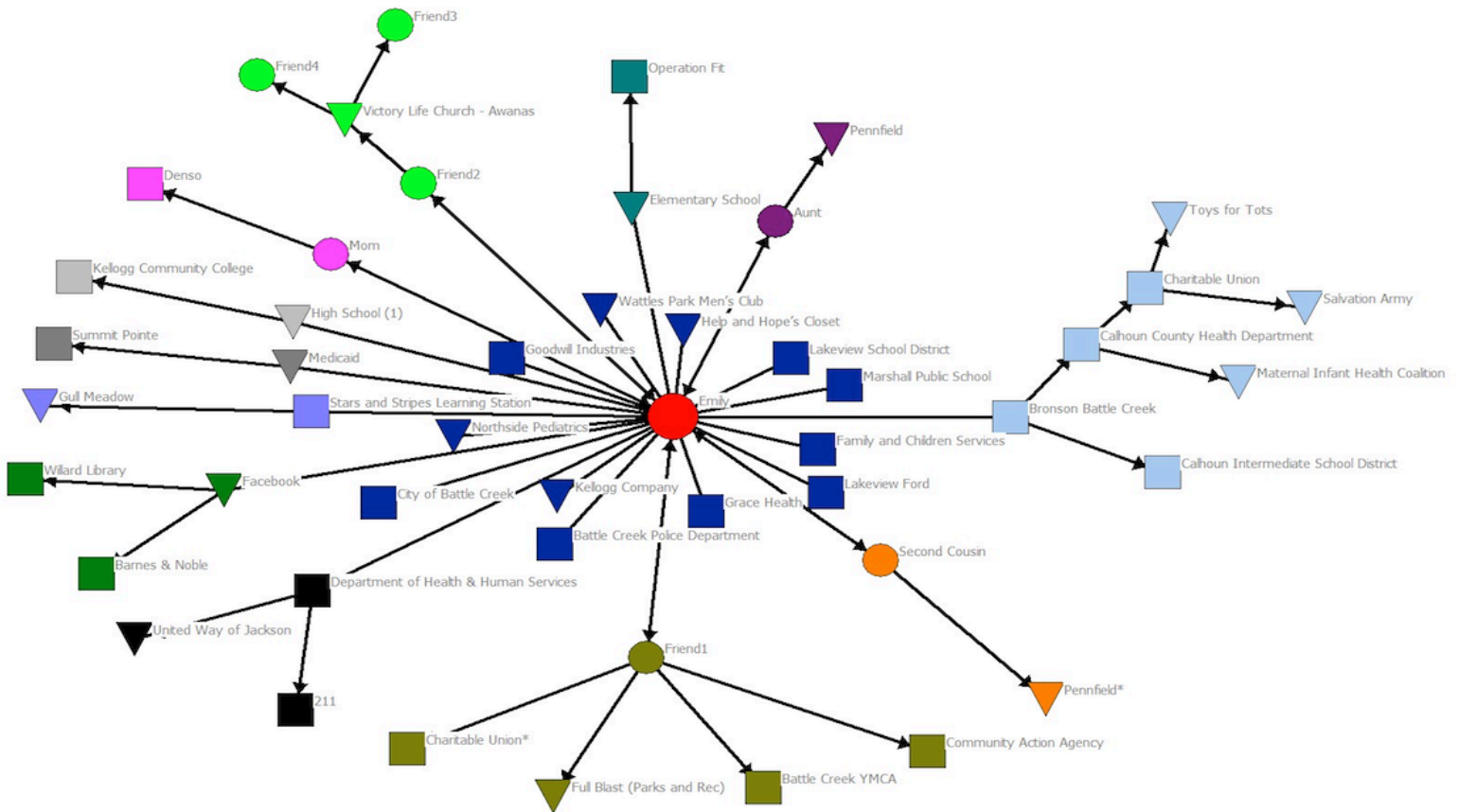
The visuals below, paired with qualitative data from the interviews show the connections between the Informal and Formal network for each women, including the key entry points. Each participant was asked if anyone (person or another organization) referred them to each organization, and if each organization referred them or helped them get connected with other opportunities.

Informal Ego Networks with Organizations/Entry Points and Descriptive Narrative

The Informal Networks below have each woman in this study in the middle as the ego. What these visuals show is how the Informal and Formal networks are interacting and overlapping for these women. The black lines are the ties that she has to both individuals and organizations. The circles represent people, the squares represent organizations within the Formal Network and the triangles represent important organizations identified by the mother,

that was not included in the Formal Network. Each group or referral set is represented by the same color showing that some entry points are more impactful than others. For example, the light green circles in the image below indicate that Emily's friend referred her to an organization, and through that organization she met two additional friends, all people who are important in her network, The organizations in dark blue did not serve as entry points because they did not make any connections to additional organizations or people.

Figure 10 Emily's Expanded Network



Key: Shape - Square for organization in the Formal Network, Circle for individual in an Informal Network, Triangle for unique organizations identified; **Color** - Red for ego; dark blue for not contained in a referral set (*all organizations that made a referral are the same color as they organizations they made the referral to*); **Arrows** - directionality of the relationship.

Emily's network shows that her entry points were a mix of individuals and organizations. For example, Friend 1 provided multiple access to 4 organizations, 3 that were included in the Formal Network and one new organization that was outside of the network. Community Action, a member of the Network Core, is one of the organizations that Emily was referred to by Friend 1 meaning that this individual helped Emily get connected with an organization who, according to the Formal Network, is connected to a high degree of other organizations. Bronson Battle Creek, while not in the Network Core, provided an opening to access 6 other organizations, 3 in the Formal Network and 3 outside of the formal network.

Overall, Emily feels like she is getting the support she needs from this Formal Network of providers saying, "I feel like in any situation, you have to work with what you are given. Of course, more money would be helpful, but with not being financially stable, there comes a lot of resources to where your kids are able to go to preschool. So I think that in the long run, if you use your resources, you can attain what you need to for your kids to be successful." An area where Emily is not getting the support she needs is regarding child support:

I guess as far as child support goes, I can get a little salty with that. I feel like it's a broken system as far as making people accountable for paying child support. And as far as DHS goes, they won't even look at it unless you have been without pay for three months. So, I'm like, "You couldn't just take it into account. I understand I can get a job tomorrow, or whatever, but put it into a formula, or something that at least gives me partial support. I feel like it's just a broken system, and there's no accountability. It's dumb...I feel like just for the courts in general, they don't hold people accountable, and they just drop the ball as far as, "Oh, we'll give you another chance." And I'm not saying I want him to be in jail or

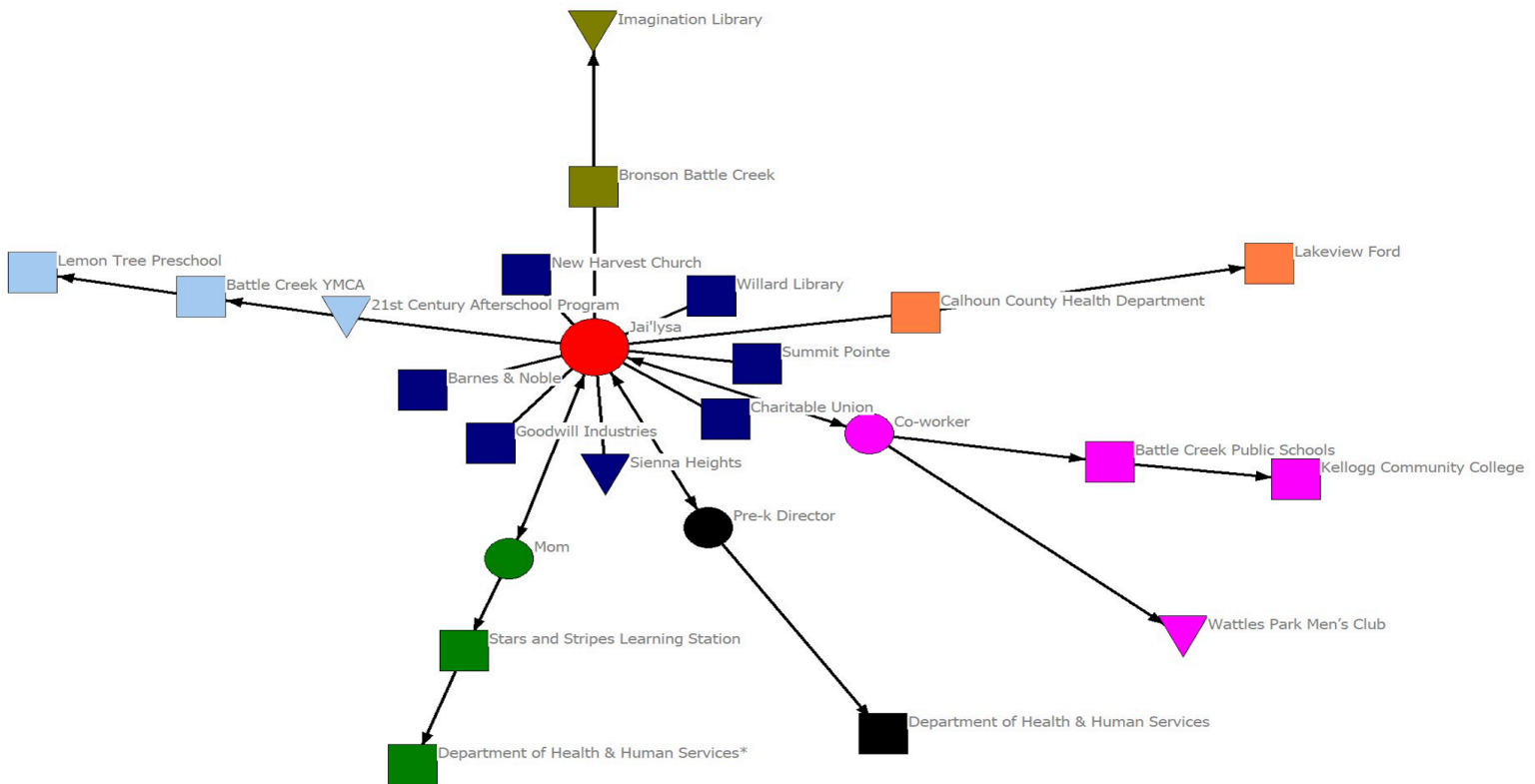
something, but if you don't have a job, and you have \$10,000 in back child support, that's a flawed system.

Jai'lysa

Jai'lysa's network shows that her entry points were a mix of people and organizations. For example, Jai'lysa's co-worker (represented in pink) connected her to one organization outside of the Formal Network, Wattles Park Men's Club, a sports program for children, and one organization within the Formal Network, Battle Creek Public Schools, who went on to connect her to another organization in the Formal Network, Kellogg Community College. Battle Creek Public Schools is part of the Network Core, so in this example, it is an individual in Jai'lysa's Informal Network that is getting her connected not just to the Formal Network, but directly to the core of that network. Of the six entry points for Jai'lysa, three were individuals in her Informal Network, one was an organization not listed in the Formal Network, and two were in the Formal Network. For Jai'lysa, this shows that her Informal ties have played an important role in helping her navigate and get connected to the Formal opportunities of support.

When asked if her Informal Network helped her get connected to the Formal Network,

Figure 11Jai'lysa's Expanded Network



Jai'lysa shared, “My network told me about these, which showed up in the other places, so I would say that.” Jai'lysa does not feel like she's is getting the support that she needs from the Formal Network. “But I think also, part of it is it's not just them coming to me; it's also me going to them. But if I don't know about it, or if I don't see anything about it, then how would I know to go to them? But I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm getting the support from the community that I need.” When asked what additional supports she would need, she didn't have any specific examples, “I really don't know what I would like. I don't even know what I would want. I just don't feel like I'm getting what I need from my community. I really don't know. I can't really say what I would like to see.” However, Jai'lysa does explain difficulty finding extracurricular activities for Malikai other than sports. She primarily relies on online information and searches.

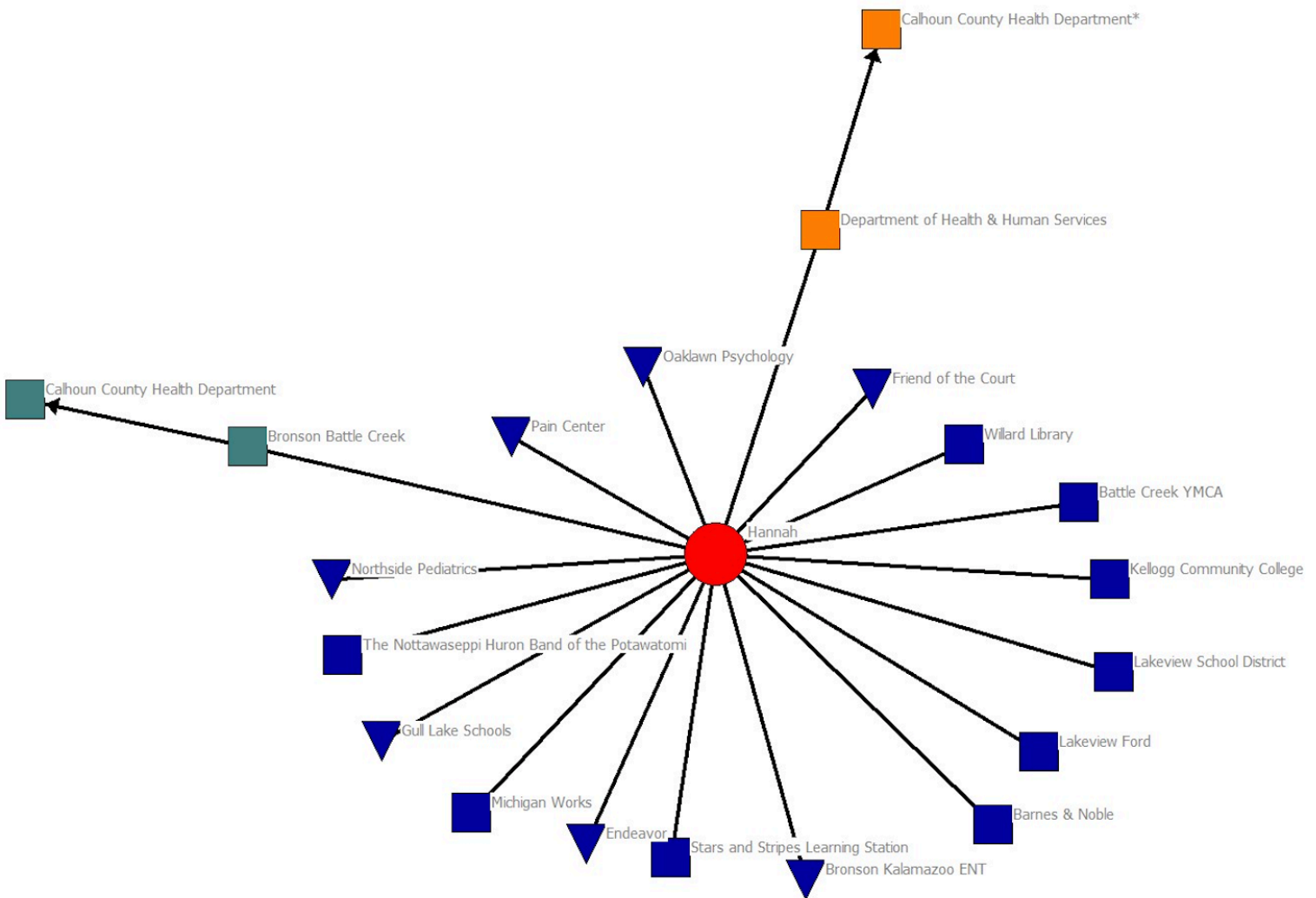
For example, Jai'lysa mentions calling the YMCA but them not answering. "I guess I could go down there, but I'm more of a "I need to look online and call ahead" person." She looked online and wanted to put him in art or music and couldn't find anything.

Hannah

Hannah's network shows that has two entry points and each one connected her to one other organization. Interestingly, both of those entry points connected her to the same organization, the Calhoun County Health Department. Of her two entry points one is in the Network Core, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the other, Bronson Battle Creek seems to be a key connector in general. When asked if she is getting the support she needs from the Formal Network Hannah responds, "I had to tug and pull a little bit. But for the most part, I get what I need."

Hannah shares her grandparents perspective on the supports she receives:
My grandma and grandpa don't agree with the system. They're not supportive with that....They try not to imply it when I'm around, because they know I'm on assistance, but they do make comments. When the news is on, they're like, "Oh, you have to work 20 hours to get assistance." They don't agree with people that are on the system. They feel it's always a waste of their tax dollars, but I'm like, 'I'm getting your tax dollars. It's helping me.' They're old, so when they make comments now, I just don't pay attention to it, because I don't think they realize that they're saying it at this point. And sometimes I think that they forget that I receive help, so I ignore it at this point."

Figure 12 Hannah's Expanded Network

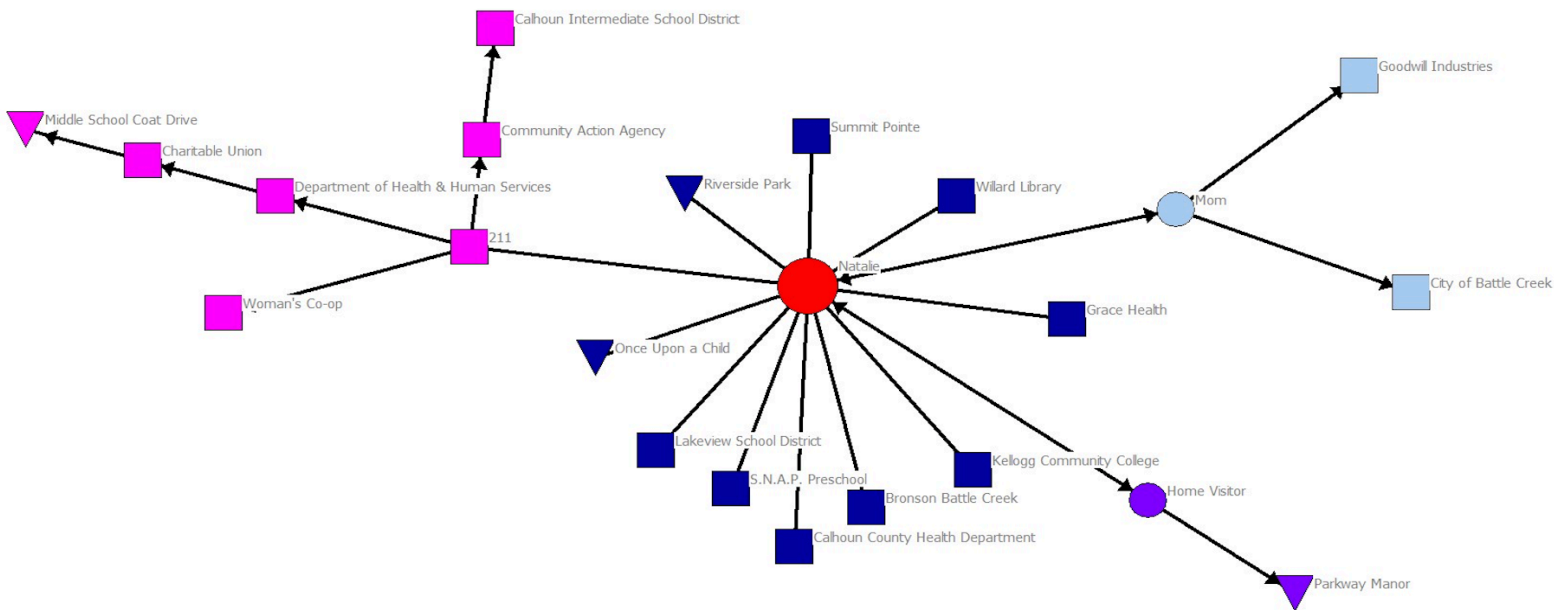


Natalie

Natalie’s network shows that she had three entry points to other resources including 211, an organization in the Formal Network, her Mom, and the Home Visitor she works with for Lindy. 211 has been a significant entry point for Natalie connecting her directly or indirectly to six other organizations, three of which are in the Network Core. Natalie has direct connections with a significant amount of organizations within the Formal Network. According to Natalie, her network doesn’t help her get connected to different services because, “they don’t use them...

I told my sister about them, but it wouldn't help my brothers or anything, because they wouldn't be eligible.”

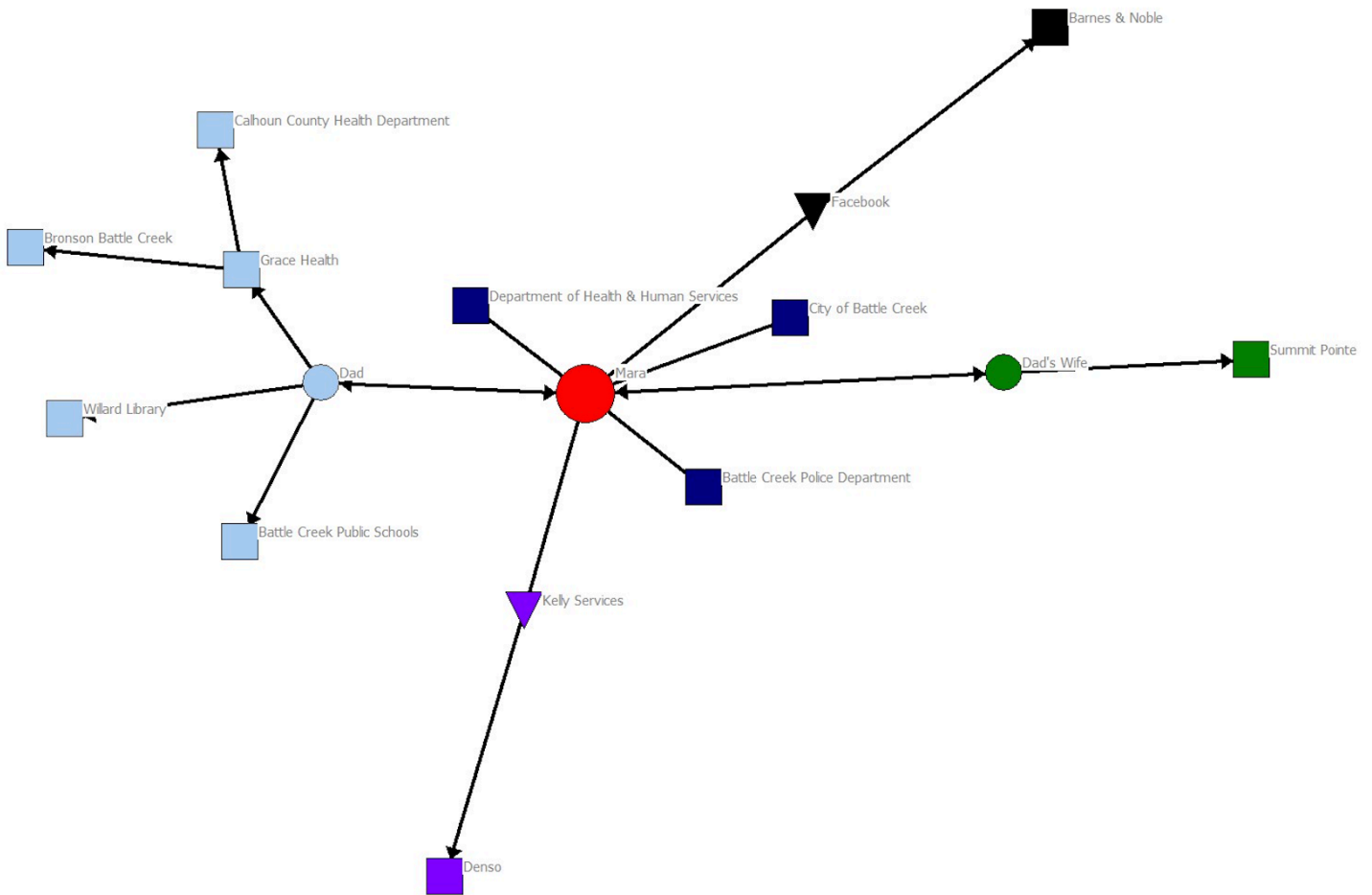
Figure 13 Natalie’s Expanded Network



Mara

Mara’s network shows that she has 4 entry points into other organizations, two were people – her Dad and Dad’s Wife and two were organizations that were not part of the Formal Network. Mara’s Dad has clearly been a huge connector for Mara introducing her to three organizations within the Network Core of the Formal Network. Mara’s network really makes the case that it was her Informal Network that is getting her connected to the Formal Network as none of her four entry points were in the Formal Network, but they all referred her to an organization(s) within the Formal Network. Mara’s network consists almost exclusively of health and mental health organizations, educational or literacy focused institutions, and an employer. Mara shared that she looks a lot of things up on the internet as evidenced by her note of

Figure 14 Mara's Expanded Network



Facebook. Mara also thinks Grace Health is the most important service to her and they could do everything there.

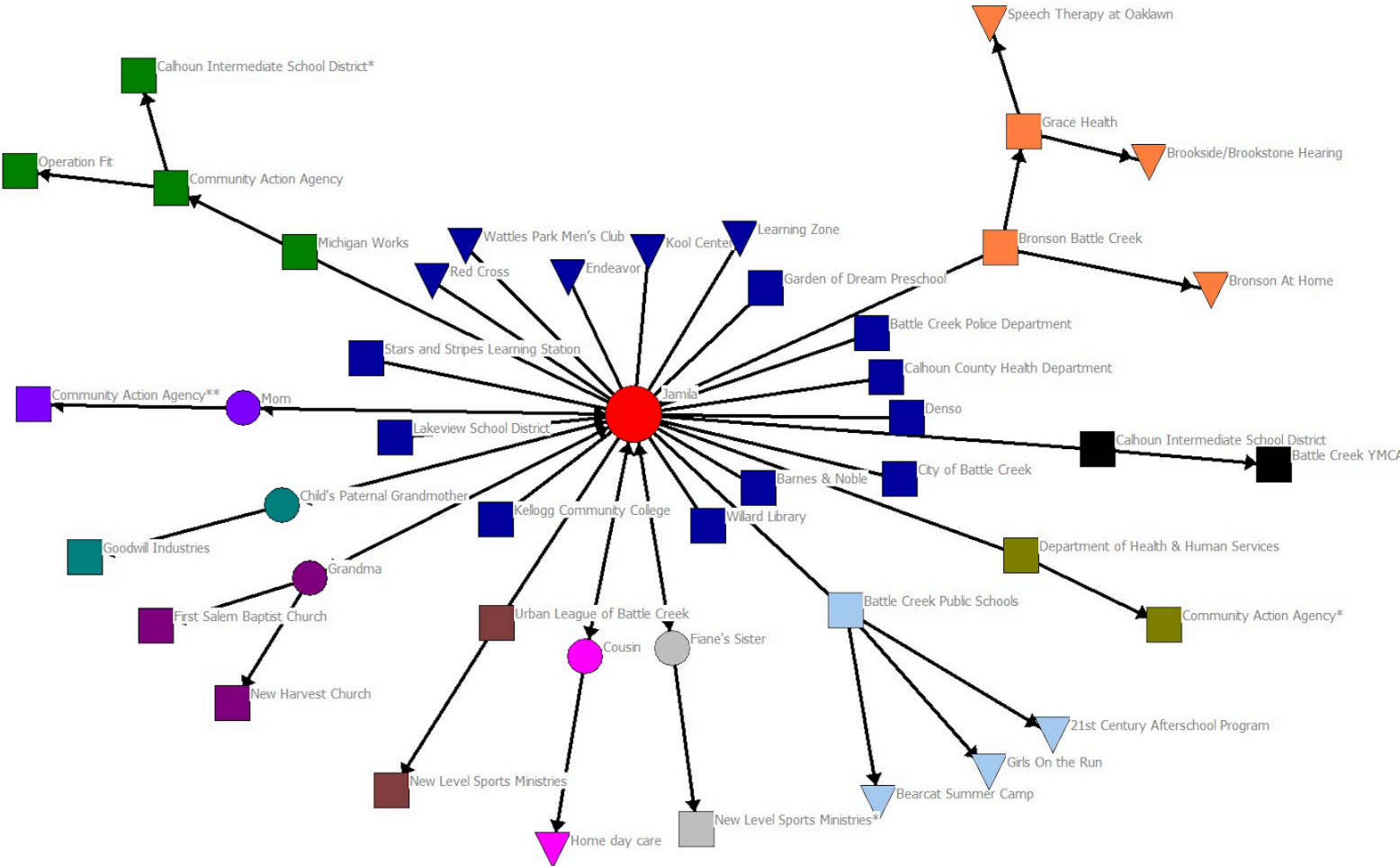
Jamila

Jamila's network shows that her entry points were a mix of individuals and organizations. The people in her network tended to connect Jamila with just one organization with the exception of her Child's Paternal Grandmother who connected her to two organizations, both churches with primarily African American congregations. Bronson Battle Creek and Michigan Works were both important entry points for Jamila connecting her to a total of seven additional organizations, three of which are in the Network Core. Worth noting in Jamia's network is that she was referred to Community Action in three different ways, by her Mom, Michigan Works

and the Department of Health and Human Services. Her network also has a pattern that shows like organizations tend to refer her to like organizations.

For example, the orange referral set starting with Bronson Battle Creek contains all health-related organizations. The light blue referral set starting with Battle Creek Public School referred her to all education and youth related programs. The Urban League, an organization that serves primarily the African American community in Battle Creek, referred her to New Level Sports, a church and sports program also primarily engaging the African American community.

Figure 15 Jamila’s Expanded Network



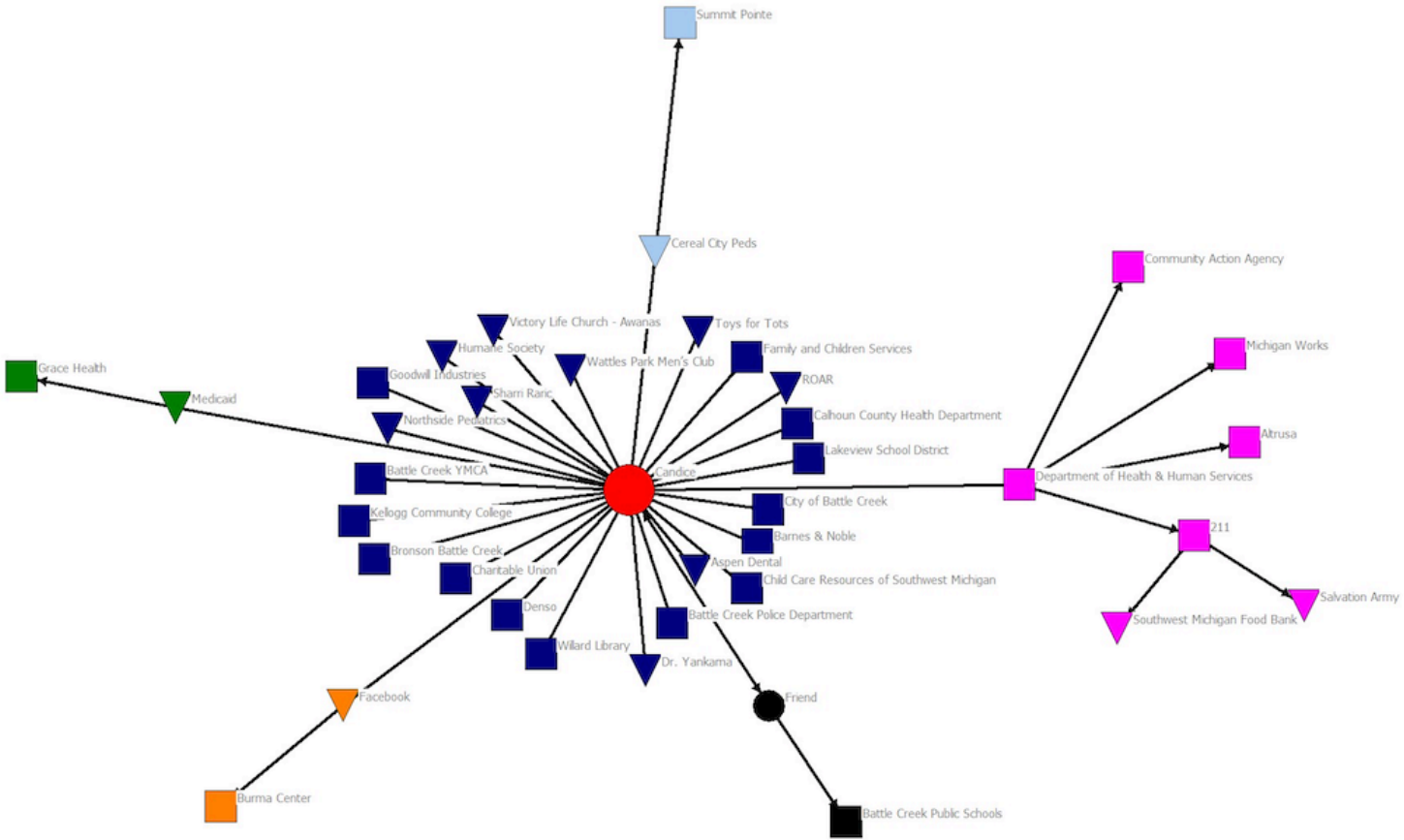
When asked if she felt like she was getting the support she needed from the Formal Network, Jamila responded, “I feel like they are willing to point me in the right direction if I need something. If they didn't offer it, they are willing to point me in the right direction if they know. But I just feel like I could utilize a lot more of this stuff than I have been.” When asked about what her ideal situation would look like for getting the support she needs, Jamila shared that having everything all in one place at the school would be very helpful. For example, when Karl needed to go see a specialist for his ears, it would have been easier for Jamila if this was a service offered at the school. “It's just little stuff like that – something in which I would not have to stretch myself so thin.”

Candice

Candice’s network shows that her entry points were primarily organizations, but a mix of organizations in the Formal Network and ones that are unique to Candice. She did have one friend that served as an entry point to Battle Creek Public Schools. The Department of Health and Human Services, one of the organizations in the Network Core, was Candice’s most significant entry point connecting her directly to four organizations, all in the Formal Network and indirectly to two additional networks outside of the Formal Network. Candice had a large number of organizations that she was directly connected to that did not refer her or connect her with additional opportunities. When asked to reflect on whether she was getting the support she needed Candice shared, “...every time I have asked for help, it doesn't seem like they give you

these many options. It really doesn't. .. I feel like most of it's, "Okay, DHS is going to help you. If DHS isn't going to help you, CAA could. And if CAA can't, then that's it. That's done."

Figure 16 Candice's Expanded Network



Cross Case Comparisons

Narrative Descriptions

When looking at the Formal Network connections, again, Emily and Jamila both had the largest networks of organizations and they both felt like they were getting the support they need/want from the Formal Network, indicating that size of the network may matter in one

feeling more or less supported. Emily shared, “I feel like in any situation, you have to work with what you are given. Of course, more money would be helpful, but with not being financially stable, there comes a lot of resources to where your kids are able to go to preschool. So I think that in the long run, if you use your resources, you can attain what you need to for your kids to be successful.” And Jamila shared, “I feel like they are willing to point me in the right direction if I need something. If they didn't offer it, they are willing to point me in the right direction if they know. But I just feel like I could utilize a lot more of this stuff than I have been.” While Candice had a smaller Informal Network, her connection to the organizations and Formal Network was one of the largest. Despite this this number of connections, however, Candice was still not feeling like she was getting the support she needed and expressed that when she asked for help, she didn't feel like she was given many options and sometimes passed back and forth between agencies. For example she said, “I feel like most of it's, ‘Okay, DHS is going to help you. If DHS isn't going to help you, CAA could. And if CAA can't, then that's it. That's done.”

Jai'lysa, while being satisfied with her large Informal Network, does not feel like she is getting the support she would like from her smaller Formal Network saying, “But I think also, part of it is it's not just them coming to me; it's also me going to them. But if I don't know about it, or if I don't see anything about it, then how would I know to go to them?” Mara's Formal Network, much like her Informal Network remained the smallest of the group and the organizations within her network were not very diverse including primarily health, mental health and educational/literacy types of organizations. One observation for Mara is that she was new to this country and to the area and many of the organizations she had in her network were based on absolute necessity such as health care providers and school for her children. While all of the other women had at least one individual in their network who helped them get connected to other

opportunities, Hannah did not have any individual and only two organizations that lead to additional supports. Interestingly though, when asked if she was getting what she needed from the opportunities Hannah said, “I had to tug and pull a little bit. But for the most part, I get what I need.”

Family Reflections of The Formal Early Childhood System Network Map

Finally, an additional qualitative piece from the family interviews makes known what their thoughts are about all of these relationships and connections. One of the last questions asked during the series of three interviews, was for each mother to take a look at the visual of The Formal Early Childhood System Network (Figure 2) on pg. 83 and to share their reflections. All participants shared a sense of surprise that there were so many organizations that were connected even though they were only aware of a portion of them. Nearly all participants shared a desire for the organizations they interact with to share information about the other possible opportunities. For example, Jai’lysa shared, “I just think that if they’re all working together, and if I go to one of these places, these places should offer me information on these other places that they work with. It would be nice to find out about them....I think if I were to take my son to the doctor, then I think it should be more than just a checkup. If they’re working with all these different places, they should be like, ‘You know, let me give you the information on what we have that pertains to your four-year-old.’ I don’t know. Any places that they’re working with that could help him, even if they look at me and say, ‘Oh, you wouldn’t need this, or you might need that.’ I don’t know what I need, so offer it to me.” Mara shared a similar reflection about the role her healthcare provider, Grace Health, having information available about other organizations and opportunities for her family. Jamila made an interesting point in, “cutting out the middle man and, and just go directly to these sources.” Several of the woman, throughout our

interviews and in response specifically to this questions, shared a sense of overwhelm with all of their responsibilities and the limited time they have available to find all of the opportunities they would like. Candice summed it up well, “I don't have a lot of time to call a million places and do all of this extra stuff when I have four kids and I work. So maybe helping do some of the footwork for you, like, ‘Okay, there are this many places that will actually possibly help.’ And having just one form for all the places that you could use in different places would help.” Hannah was the only participant to have a mostly negative response to the picture sharing, If they're overwhelmed with too many relationships, then they're not going to spend quality time on just you, or just this person, or this person. ...It's like you're another number.”

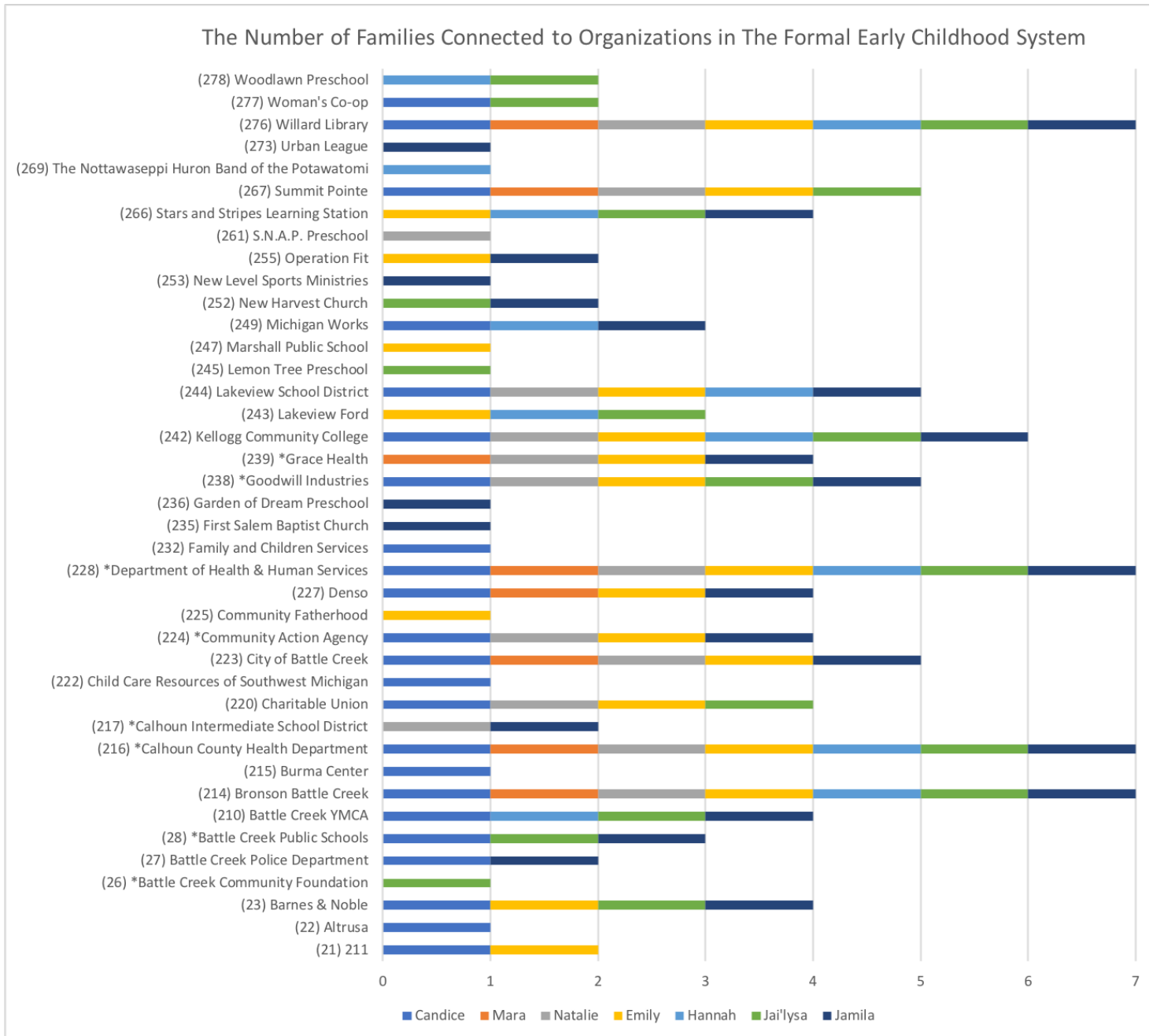
Organizations in Family Networks

Overall of the 78 organizations represented in the Formal Early Childhood System Network Map, over half, or 40, are present in the networks of at least 1 of the 7 families interviewed in this study. The organizations identified as the core in sub-question one, also showed up strongly in the family networks including: Battle Creek Community Foundation, in 1 family network; Battle Creek Public Schools, in 3 family networks; Calhoun County Health Department, in all 7 family networks; Calhoun Intermediate School District, in 2 family networks; Community Action Agency, in 4 family networks; Department of Health and Human Services, in all 7 family networks; Goodwill Industries in 5 family networks and Grace Health, in 4 family networks. There were also organizations outside of the core that showed up in multiple families networks including: Summit Point, the Community Mental Health Agency, in 5 networks; Lakeview School District in 5 networks; Kellogg Community College in 6 networks; and the City of Battle Creek in 5. Across all seven families there were only four organizations that showed every time: Bronson Battle Creek, the only hospital in the Battle Creek Community

and Willard Public Library, both non-core organizations; and the Department of Health and Human Services and Calhoun County Health Department. Important to note, The Urban League, New Harvest Christian Center a predominately African American Church and New Level Sports, a sports program associated with a predominately African American Church, Lemon Tree Preschool, and the Battle Creek Community Foundation showed up uniquely in Jamila and/or Jai'lysa's networks, the two African American mothers in the study. This suggests that there may be some connections between characteristics of the ego and of the organizations that make them more or less likely to show up in one's network.

Table 10 provides an overview of the organizations that show up across the family networks and how frequently they are showing up. For an organization to be included in this table, it had to show up in at least one family network. The Early Childhood System Network organizations are listed along the left side. The organizations with the * are the organization that make up the core of the network as outlined in the exploration of sub-question one. The number in parenthesis are the numbers assigned to each organization that show up in some of the visuals below that did not allow enough space for name labeling. Along the bottom each family was assigned a color to represent that a particular organization is in their network. For example, Woodlawn Preschool (278) listed at the top, is in Candice's network in light blue and in Jai'lysa's network in green.

Table 6: The Number of Families Connected to Organizations in the Formal Network



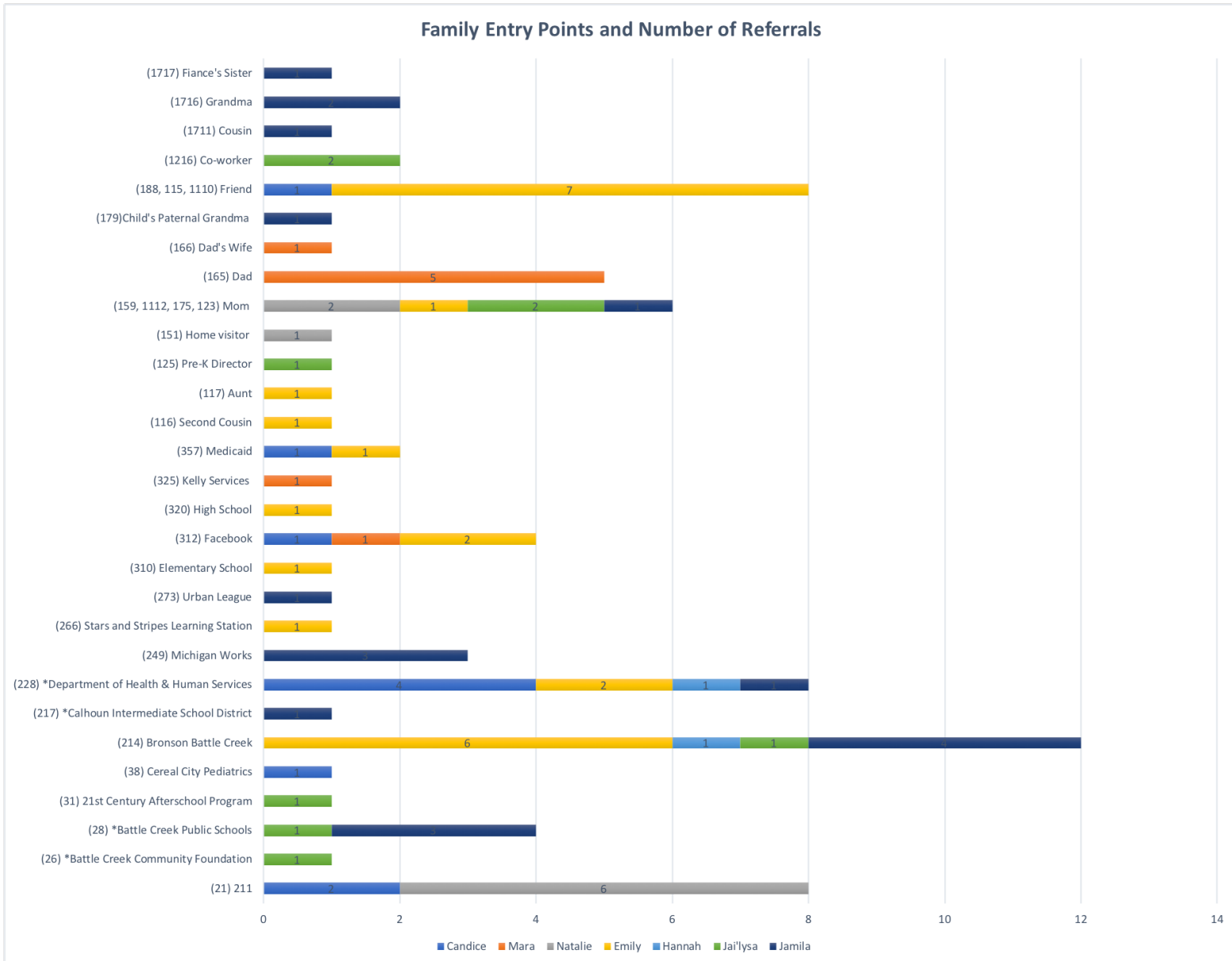
Entry Points

While the seven families in totality interacted with 40 organizations in the Formal Network, there were only 11 organizations that were identified as their “entry points” into the network as shown below. In Table 7, listed along the left-hand side are the people and organizations that served as entry points for the families. As with Table 6, along the bottom each family was assigned a color and each organization a number corresponding to a subsequent figure. If an organization/person was identified as an entry point, or someone that made a referral to other opportunities/organizations, the family’s color shows up in that column. The length of the bar for each family represents the number of opportunities that entry point opened up for each family – this includes both direct referrals and the resulting referrals that came from those direct referrals. An example shows, the organization 211 (21), an information and referral organization, was an entry point for Candice providing 2 referrals and for Natalie, providing 6 referrals total including both direct and indirect referrals. When a common family member, such as “Mom”, showed up the data was combined, but the unique Mom’s will be represented in the following visual by the four different unique numbers in parenthesis to the left of Mom, the same is true for “Friend”.

There are many relevant observations that can be drawn from this data. Of the 29 total entry points across all 7 families, 13 were family members or Informal Network members, 10 were organizations in the Formal Network, and 6 were new organizations identified by at least 1 family. This shows the value of the Informal Network and the resource knowledge within that network that is helping to get the women in this study connected to opportunities. Of the 10 organizations from the Formal Network, 4 showed up as entry points for more than one family – 211; Battle Creek Public Schools, Bronson Battle Creek; and the Department of Health and

Human Services, indicating there is something about these organizations, their function, the services they provide, the way they interact with people and other organizations, etc. that is making them more important and more valuable to these families in accessing opportunities. Additionally, the mothers of the women in this study were entry points for 4 of the seven women suggesting that even once a mother's child is grown, they still provide support in helping their child access needed resources and important opportunities. Relatedly, showing the importance of the Informal network, every family had at least one individual in their Informal Network that served as an entry point. Finally, of the organizations serving as entry points, four organizations that were from the Formal Network core including the Battle Creek Community Foundation, Battle Creek Public Schools, Calhoun Intermediate School District, and the Department of Health and Human Services. This is also important to note because these four organizations become incredibly important in the Formal and Informal networks because their positionality within the network and connection to families suggests they may be key institutions in getting the families connected to the most resources and opportunities available.

Table 7: Family Entry Points and Number of Referrals



Referrals for Families

Figure 3 below starts to bring it all together from a network standpoint. It shows the referral ties and sets identified by each family (i.e. 165 and (Mara's Dad) referred 16 (Mara) to 239 (Grace Health) indicated by the red arrow of which the directionality represents who is making the referral to whom. I have used black boxes in the visual below to indicate the people

and organizations to highlight this example) Each referral set, as just exemplified, is shown as the same color. Continuing with the same example, if you look at the Entry Point Figure above it shows, as is shown in Mara’s ego network with organizations (included in Table 8) her Dad referred her to three different organizations, and one of those organizations referred her to two additional organizations. That is indicated below by the red line coming from her dad (165) and going out to three organizations including 239 – Grace Health; 276 – Willard Library; and 28 – Battle Creek Public Schools. It then shows that Grace Health has a gray referral arrow going back to Mara that connects her to 214 – Bronson Battle Creek Hospital and 216 – The Calhoun County Health Department. What this also shows then is that 214 – Bronson, is a larger node indicating that it is making multiple referrals and is also connected to at least three other referral sets indicated by the pink, green, and red lines. The same is also true to 216 as indicated by the multiple colored lines coming into and going out of 216 – the Calhoun County Health Department.

Table 8 - Key for the Figure 17: Referral Sets for the Seven Women in the Study

Size, color, and label of the nodes

Size for node	How many family connections (the bigger, the more connections)
Color for nodes	Green – organizations that initiated a referral Red – organizations that did not initiate a referral
Label for the node	*Labels that start with: 1 – people (11 – Emily; 12 – Jai’lysa; 13 – Hannah; 15 - Natalie ; 16 – Mara; 17 – Jamila; 18 – Candice) 2 – organizations in The Formal Early Childhood System Network 3 – organizations outside of the Formal Early Childhood System Network

Color and arrow(s) of the line between the ego and alter

Color of the tie	Each represents a referral set
Arrow(s) of the line	The arrow points away from the sender and toward the receiver

Figure 17: Referral Sets for the Seven Women in the Study

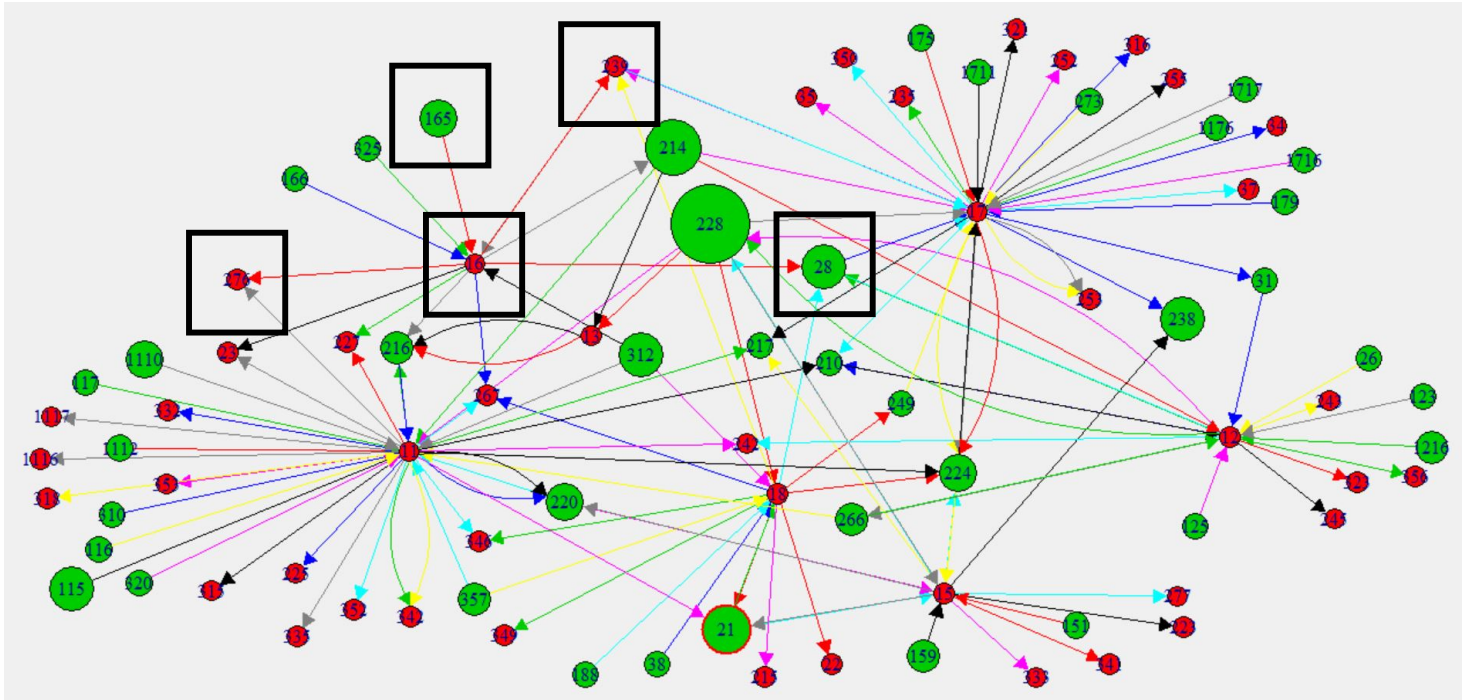


Figure 3 has its limitations in that it is overcomplicated, difficult to read and it takes a great deal of study (and possibly a magnifying glass) to decode all of the relationships; however, it serves its purpose by visually bringing together how the network is arranged from an entry point and referral standpoint and shows the core-periphery type of design that has emerged. Nodes around the outside are the unique relationships held by each family that are either making a referral to the core or receiving a referral from the core. The organizations that emerge in the middle of the network that are larger, represent a higher number of referrals made, and have multiple ties coming in and going out visualizing that these central organizations are making and receiving referrals across multiple families. This becomes a new type of core that represents how the families are experiencing the networks and possibly the organizations that need to or could become more central in the Formal Network to better improve access overall. All of this

information was shared in detail through a variety of figures including the family ego networks, and the table showing number entry points and referrals. Across all families there were 56 sets of referrals made, each referral set represented by a different color. A The green nodes represent an organization that initiated a referral and the red nodes are those that did not initiate. The numbers of the relevant organizations are identified in the two tables above and the full list of organizations and numbers are included in the Appendix A.

The Revised Network Informed by the Family Data

Figure 4 is a different way of looking at the data that removes the families and keeps the referral data, which shows the direct connections between those making and receiving the referrals, and this adds back in the relevant data from the original social network analysis of from The Formal Network.

Table 9 - Key for Figure 18 The Revised Network Informed by Family Data

Size, color, and label of the nodes

Size for node	How many family connections (the bigger, the more connections)
Color for nodes	Green - core org with ego network data Red - core org no ego network data Blue – non-core org Light blue - person
Label for the node	*Labels that start with: 1 – people 2 – organizations in The Formal Early Childhood System Network 3 – organizations outside of the Formal Early Childhood System Network The full key is included in the Appendix A

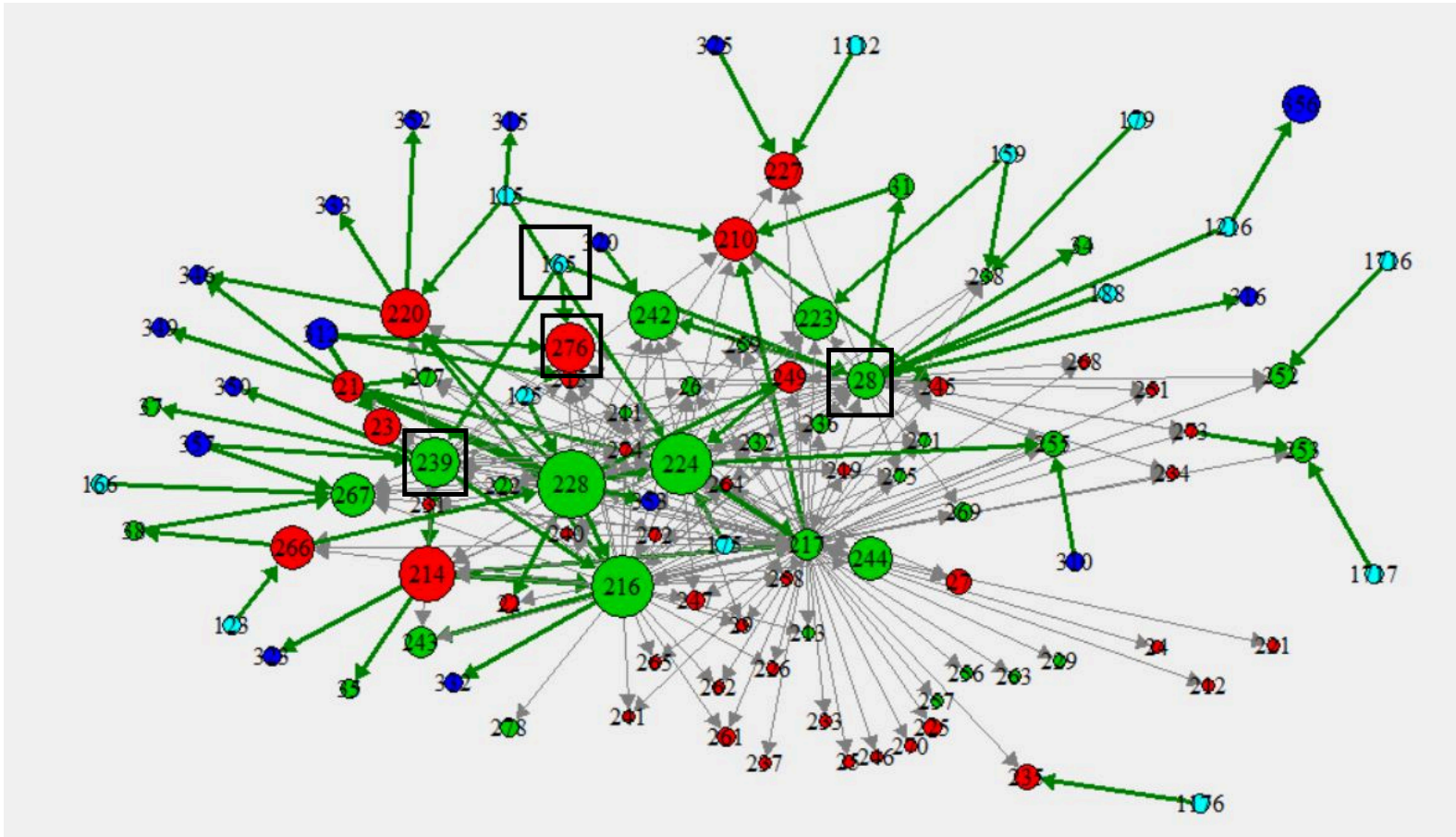
Color and arrow(s) of the line between the ego and alter

Color of the tie	Green – referral ties Gray ²² – interaction ties based on the Formal Network data
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²² Since the gray ties are difficult to discern, ego networks of key organizations are included in the Appendix F. Given that 228 has the largest number of connections with families, is making a

Arrow(s) of the line	The arrow points away from the sender and toward the receiver (the ties that were completely disconnected from the network were removed. There were only three sets representing an individual that referred to a unique organization outside of the core)
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Figure 18: Revised Network with Family Data



Continuing with the previous example of the referrals from Mara’s father 165 is connected through a referral tie to 276 – Grace Health, 239 – Willard Library, and 28 – Battle Creek Public Schools. This visual then shows, consistent with many of the other data analysis

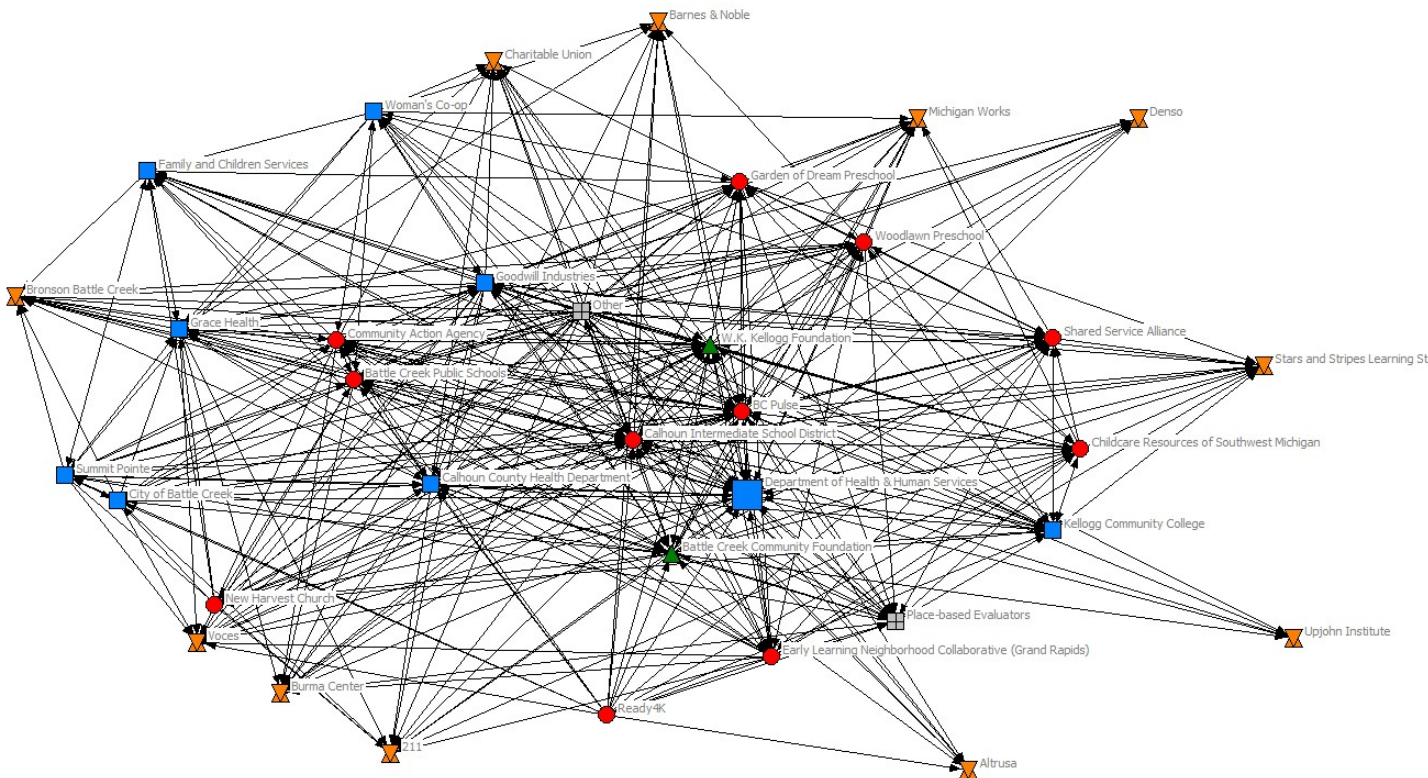
significant amount of referrals, was identified as an entry point for 4 families and is part of the Formal Network Core, I included their ego network below.

and visualization approaches, that 239 – Grace Health is in the core of the network with multiple referral and relationship ties represented by a larger node meaning more family connections. The same is true for 28 – Battle Creek Public Schools. This visual makes clear the following: the organizations represented by a larger node showing connections with multiple families, were also organizations making and receiving a lot of referrals for families (green lines) and are very connected in sharing and receiving resources (gray lines); there were examples of referrals being made between organizations even if they did not indicate a gray tie of information sharing; the Informal Networks of the families and the non-core organizations are an important part of the experience of the families as they are serving as entry points or a recipient of a referral; there is the emergence of an important “core” or organizations that appear central to the experiences of families.

As noted in the Key for the Diagram the gray colored lines in the background represent the ties the organization has with other organizations in the Formal Early Childhood System Network, based on their responses to the network analysis survey. Ego networks have been created for key organizations and are included in the Appendix I; however, below I have included the Department of Health and Human Services because based on the responses from the seven families, this is possibly the most significant organization in the whole network. The Department of Health and Human Services was one of the three organizations included in the networks of all seven families and was one of three organizations that was a direct entry point for four of the seven families. It was also included with 10 other organizations in the Network Core, however it was right near the defined cut off point of 33 direct ties, having 34 direct ties and a lower Broker rate of 360.5, meaning the number of times they lie on the shortest path between two alters allowing them to make connections between organizations. What this possibly shows

is that even though DHS is in the core, they are not interacting with others as frequently as the others in the core. Additionally, in all of the interviews, this was the organizations that every mother seemed to have a lot to share about. Bronson Battle Creek was positioned similarly but does not have an ego network because they did not respond to the social network analysis.

Figure 19: Ego Network of the Department of Health and Human Services



Note.1. Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Up Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: others.
 2. The bigger symbol in this diagram is the focal node in the ego-network.
 3. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of interventions.

Response to Overarching Research Question

As noted in the literature and predicted at the outset of this study, the intersection between the Informal Network of the family and the Formal Network of organizations proved to be important. Across all 7 families there were 29 different entry points identified: 13 were family

members or Informal Network members, 10 were organizations in the Formal Network, and 6 were new organizations identified by at least 1 family. Of the 10 organizations from the Formal Network, 4 showed up as entry points for more than one family – 211; Battle Creek Public Schools, Bronson Battle Creek; and the Department of Health and Human Services. The interesting commonality of all four organizations is that they are focused on basic needs such as health, food, etc. or required needs such as education. The Department of Health and Human Services was one of the three organizations included in the networks of all seven families and was one of three organizations that was a direct entry point for four of the seven families. It was also included with 10 other organizations in the Network Core, however it was right near the defined cut off point of 33 direct ties, having 34 direct ties and a lower Broker rate of 360.5, meaning the number of times they lie on the shortest path between two alters allowing them to make connections between organizations. What this possibly shows is that even though DHS is in the core, they are not interacting with others as frequently as the others in the core.

Additionally, in all of the interviews, this was the organization that every mother seemed to have a mix of both positive and negative experiences that they wanted to share. This is a very influential organization in families receiving supports for some basic needs and all responses were related to the interaction with the case worker and the importance of that interaction on the quality of their experience. The interaction was positive and the woman felt like respected and that her needs were addressed, otherwise it was negative. Every family member has at least one person or individual that was an entry point into the network – mothers and fathers were important entry points, which is not entirely surprising given that in nearly all of the Informal Ego networks the women’s mother and/or father were among those with whom they were in most frequent contact and with whom they relied on for many different types of support

regarding their children and their overall well-being. Many of the mothers and fathers of the women in this study had also resided in the Battle Creek community for an extended period of time which also may have given them more exposure to organizations and support in the community.

The literature suggested the importance of more informal organizations serving as entry points for families while also making the Formal networks more culturally relevant for families (Valente, 2012; Lareau, 2005; 2010; Ishimaru et al., 2016; Callejas et al.). Lin (2000) and Yosso (2005) noted through their review of the literature that Communities of Color tend to have more informal social ties in their networks through churches, social clubs and kin. Again while this is a small sample size, the two women of color in this study, did have networks that consisted or more extended family such as cousins and aunts and more churches and organizations specifically serving people of color in Battle Creek, suggesting characteristics of the persona and the organization may matter. Jamila and Jai'lysa also noted the important role of mentors – they were the only two mothers in the network that specifically mentioned the impact a mentor had on some successes they've experienced and/or access to resources and opportunity. They were also two of the three women who were most satisfied with the support they were receiving from their networks which is consistent with Yosso's (2005) description of the family capital component of community cultural wealth showing the great value of this family capital.

In the final chapter, I lift up the findings from the previous three chapters that seem most relevant to consider in answering the overarching research question and in determining the types of network interventions that may be most impactful.

Chapter VII – Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

Discussion

I begin this discussion by reflecting back on my conceptual framework. A quote that has resonated deeply with my experience conducting this study and writing this dissertation comes from Ravitch and Riggan (2017) in which they quoted Spillane, “On the one hand, you construct a framework that guides your study design and data collection from the outside. I don’t think I have ...ever done a study where the initial frame was sufficient to get me through data analysis and writing. In other words, always, I’ve come up against, ‘Well this framework is inadequate” (p. 75). What I originally envisioned as the trajectory of this research was shifted as I engaged more deeply with the women I interviewed. I had originally set out to recruit families that would include interviews with both men and women and possibility grandparents or extended family; however, the people that persisted in my study were seven women. While I had always intended to take into account gender, race and class, I had underestimated the role this would and should play in my contextualization of this work and my analysis and sensemaking of the data. While my study was not and is not designed to measure the impact specifically of gender, race and class, my findings forced me to dig deeper and spend more time reflecting on how our systems and society in general is currently structured to support women and children. Through review of the literature and the conversations with the women, it became more evident that due to subtle forms of bias and discrimination, in combination with structural racism and sexism, there is the potential that the social services that are made available to women actually institutionalize women’s chronic dependency and social disadvantage and maintain the status quo that keeps

women in restricted roles socially and economically (Godsil et al., 2016; Abad-Merino et al. 2018; Homan, 2019). This is compounded when the responsibility of caring for children often falls primarily to women (Bost, 2002), especially single mothers who are faced with making less ambitious career choices, or no career choices at all, because we have a system in place that as a whole does not respect or support the dual responsibilities of women as mothers and women as workers/professionals (Godsil et al., 2016). Accounting for these injustices is part of why *how* women navigate these systems and how they are able to construct and utilize their networks to support the success of themselves and their children matters so much. As Powell and Grant-Thomas (2006) note, “Access to opportunities is not equally available to all.” In a society where individual bias and systemic barriers exist for all women and even more so for women of color, strategically entering into these networks and systems with the support of family, friends and/or trusted organizations can potentially have a significant impact on the resources and opportunities women are able to access to contribute to improved outcomes. While I am not ignoring the need to dismantle structures that perpetuate inequity, children continue to grow up in a society that has not yet achieved the level of equity they deserve so it is important to take note of how the available services and opportunities are accessed, recognizing quality, cultural appropriateness, etc. vary (and many are in need of improvement and/or reform) and experiences and outcomes are impacted by race, gender and class.

My original conceptual framework did not emphasize enough the importance of these entry points as access to opportunity as defined by Powell and Grant-Thomas (2006), which ended up becoming the central focus of this study. What drew me to do this type of work initially was a curiosity about how organizations were working together and whether families experienced any benefits from those organizational relationships. As noted above, this general

viewpoint became much more focused once I dug more deeply into the literature on equity and gender and as I analyzed the data from the interviews with the women.

The design of my study only allows me to draw conclusions and observations based on the data available. I will discuss those items first, then turn to broader implications and conclusions. The three most relevant and important findings in addressing the overarching research question are: 1) A tightly connected network of formal systems and services doesn't necessarily result in an improved experience for the end users, the women and families; 2) There are key organizations within networks that are more critical to families than others which provides an opportunity to consider how network interventions might position those organizations differently within the network to improve the quality and flow of information through the network to improve the experience for women and families; and 3) The Informal Networks of women in this study were extremely important in providing support *and* entry points to access opportunities.

A Networked System Does not Equal a Quality System for All

The initial look at the social network analysis data from sub-question one and the organizations that show up in family networks, gives the impression that there seems to be a significant amount of alignment between the Informal Networks of the families and the Formal Network, with over half of the organizations in both networks. Additionally, the Network Core of the Formal Network was strongly represented in the Informal Networks with two of those organizations showing up in all seven networks – the Calhoun County Health Department and the Department of Health and Human Services. However, while there appeared to be overall alignment, through qualitative exploration with the study participants reflecting on the Formal Network and their experiences, there were gaps in the quality of interactions and the level and

type of engagement with families that emerged. This finding is significant because it reveals an opportunity for a different or new approach to social network analysis that more intentionally pairs network data with qualitative data to yield results that might otherwise be overlooked. The data used to address sub-question one of this study regarding the composition and structure of the Formal Network was conducted in a fairly routine way through a survey with questions regarding frequency of interaction and the type of information and resources exchanged. This is useful data to have in understanding how a Formal System is networked and structured, however it is only from the perspective of the service provider and is very limited in what it is able to tell about the experience of the end users of that system. The qualitative data from the interviews with the study participants were then used to construct their own networks that included the details of their experiences, how they got connected to opportunities, the type of information they received and the usefulness of that information, etc. This approach provides the level of data needed to begin to construct a deeper understanding of the network and where interventions may be important to shift or strengthen the network in ways that improve the experiences and outcomes for families. Much of the literature I reviewed used social network data from the organizational perspective that lacked the perspective of families (Friedman, 2007; Nageswaran et al., 2012; Systems of Care Cross Site Evaluation, 2010). I believe this study shows that when the perspectives of families are included as an additional key data source, the conclusions that are drawn about the impact of a social network are shifted. Key analytical questions guiding this research were: Is there evidence that a more closely networked system improves outcomes for families over time? (Friedman, 2007; Nageswaran, 2012; Davis et al., 2012) and do some organizations appear to be better entry points than others? If so, why? (Friedman, 2007). The answers that emerged to these questions are discussed below.

There were many examples of this from my study where at face value there seems to be alignment between the Formal and Informal systems. The Calhoun County Health Department shows up prominently in all networks; however, there is evidence that the mothers are not fully utilizing key programs that could improve their health and the health of their children, WIC specifically. WIC, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. While most or all of the women qualified, a few made comments that they only used it for the first two years or a short period of time because it wasn't worth the effort. Another example is the Department of Health and Human Services, of which every mother had a lot to say. There was a common concern regarding the caseworker with many of the women explaining that person made all of the difference. If a caseworker was "good" which many women defined as responsive, kind/pleasant/respectful to interact with and keeping on top of important paperwork, it was a great experience. If it was someone who was not "good", their experience was much the opposite. This is consistent with Lipsky's (1980) explanation of the Street Level Bureaucrats and the important role that front-line workers play in implementing programs. This shows a need for some institutionalization of quality and examination of individual bias and structural inequities within DHS as many of the mothers shared poor treatment and challenges with lost paperwork and lack of follow through. Another interesting theme that emerged through the qualitative data, is that while it looks in the social network that DHS, Community Action and 211 are connected, they are, but the experiences several families shared is that it can turn into a referral triangle that doesn't result in needed services, but more so families just being referred

from one organization back to the other. Kellogg Community College is yet another example where while families showed to be connected in the network data, but the qualitative data told a more nuanced story. While it is in the network of many families, their common response was “took a few classes” or “was close to getting a degree” or “working on a degree”. Given what this data (and a lot of other research) has shown about the connection of stable and sustainable employment to the well-being of mothers and their children, interaction is not enough - quality and results matter. These examples show challenges at all levels of the system: the individual/interpersonal where mothers may be experiencing bias; the organizational level, where practices may not be in place to follow through on services and institutional policies may not promote equitable service delivery; and the systemic level where the types of requirements put in place are so restrictive and create so many barriers that those who need the services are not able to access them. These requirements may be driven by bias about who deserves and who doesn’t deserve these types of services and/or driven by other motivating factors such as budget priorities.

This level of examination is critically important because it shifts the conversations that can be had about impact. It moves the conversation from outputs (i.e.: I connected one mother with four resources) to outcomes (i.e.: I am a mother who was connected with four resources, one of which was helpful and met my needs; two that referred me somewhere else which became a dead end; and one that was culturally incompetent). This level of accountability is necessary to begin to break through the biases and injustices that are embedded within our formal systems and structures. As noted in the beginning of the literature review these networks of organizations are extremely important in addressing complex social problems and creating more equitable systems and outcomes for children and families because one organization or institution often can’t do it

alone (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Systems of Care, 2010; Foster-Fishman et al. 2007, Jolin, et al., 2012). Even the network data in this study shows that organizations are working better together and sharing information, which are steps in the right direction. Now we need to turn our attention to the quality of those interactions, not just within organizations which is easier to measure, but between organizations. Through addressing the aforementioned analytical questions posed in the conceptual framework, new questions emerge. What are multiple organizations contributing to shared outcomes and what is their responsibility in that process? How are front-line workers managing bias as they interact with clients? As these new ways of working are being established, how are we building new systems that are equitable and not recreating the barriers and inequities that have continually lead to disparate outcomes for women, women of color and children and families of color?

The Opportunity of Critical Organization Types within a Network

This study showed that there were unexpected organizations that proved to be highly integrated into the Informal Networks of the women, but not as integrated within the Formal Network. This addresses the wondering posed in the conceptual framework regarding who are the “front porch” organizations (Calleja et al. 2010), cultural brokers, (Ishimaru et al., 2016), cultural guides (Lareau, 2005) and what role do they play in helping families access opportunities? Two, potentially underutilized or under connected organizations that emerged in this study were the local hospital, Bronson Battle Creek, and Willard Library, the public library. These organizations showed up in all networks and also served as strong entry points. The inclusion of Bronson follows the theme of the frequency that health and mental health related organizations show up in all of the family networks. In addition to Willard Library, Barnes and Noble, both literacy focused organizations, also emerged as critical and potentially a very

impactful opportunity space. It is a known fact that early literacy is essential to later school and ultimately life success for children and if these families are having regular interactions with these two literacy-based institutions, maximizing that experience seems advantageous to improving outcomes for children. Additionally, Kellogg Community College and Michigan Works – two organizations focused on training and education for the parent proved to be important, but possibly underutilized organizations in this study. Given the prior finding about the important differences in network composition, support and opportunity access between the mothers who were consistently employed and the mothers who were not, this is another area for further exploration. Is there a way to intervene in the network (Valentine, 2012) to make these types of organizations more central in the network and providing even more support to the women to improve their outcomes for their families and their children? Based on the data from this study, the answer seems to be yes. This type of data and understanding, from the end user perspective, in this case the women in this study, provides guidance on where and potentially how to intervene in a network. Some of the recommendations from the women were focused on creating more centralized access/entry points meaning they could go to one trusted organization and that organization could help them navigate other opportunities. Ultimately, the goal would be to intervene in the network to help shift it in a direction that more centrally and purposefully locates organizations and institutions deemed important by families themselves and focused not just on network location and sharing of information, but quality, competency and equity of the services and opportunities offered. In addition, this research has shown the integration and pairing of the opportunities available through Formal Networks with the support, opportunity and network capital provided in Informal Networks is important in the overall support a women has access to as she is raising her child/children.

The Informal Networks of Women

This study provides examples of how women go about gaining access to the opportunities available, of which their personal relationships and their own network capital proved to be an important and frequent entry point. Across all 7 families there were 29 different entry points identified into the Formal System: 13 were family members or Informal Network members compared to 10 being organizations in the Formal Network, and 6 being new organizations identified by at least 1 family. At a very basic level it can be concluded that Informal Networks are key entry points. Critical, however, to this study, is also understanding the network capital that exists within Informal Networks that contribute to positive outcomes for women, children and families (Hunter et al. 2018; Yosso, 2005). About half of the women in the study, including the two women of color, (Emily, Jai'lysa and Jamila) had much more robust networks than the literature predicted they might. Their networks all included a mix of immediate family, extended family, co-workers and professionals and their networks were the most female dominated with over two-thirds of their networks all consisting of female alters. They were also the only women in the study that expressed satisfaction with the support they were receiving from their Informal Networks. This is compared to the other four women who had much smaller networks, made up primarily of family, and who expressed less satisfaction with the support they are receiving. This suggests simply having relationships with more people leads to the potential to access more and different kinds of support leaving one feeling more satisfied with the support they have. It also provides one with more options. For example, Jai'lysa has several options of people who could help her pick up her child from school while Candice only had her mother and if her mother wasn't available she then had to deal with a difficult and often stressful situation of getting to work on time and having her child to school on time. These are very practical

examples, however, often monumental supports as a mother is trying to balance childcare and providing for her family. If that job is what is providing for her family and she loses it because she is late that one day her mother couldn't help, that small problem becomes a life changing event.

The size of someone's network could be connected to their personality and how social they are as well as a variety of other characteristics previously addressed (Lin, 2000; Kana'iaupuni et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005; Powell and Grant-Thomas, 2006), however, for those less likely or less able to build a supportive personal network might there be ways to help them get connected to the social capital within their own neighborhoods and parent/school networks where mothers in particular, can rely on each other in times of need for smaller things that make a big difference. This addresses the question of whether there is an opportunity for families to help other families or peer-to-peer mentoring or interactions (Systems of Care Cross Site Evaluation, 2010). There might be a role for one of the trusted and common entry to points, such as Willard Library, to play in creating spaces for families to build relationships with one another and strengthen or expand their Informal Networks. A local example, not previously mentioned in this study is a program called the Women's Co-op that is "a 501(c)(3) network of low- and no-income women helping women create better lives for themselves and their families in Calhoun County, Michigan. Our members empower each other, trade skills and expertise, share resources, and develop lasting friendships." While the number of women that currently participate is limited, expanding this type of approach where women are intentionally networking together for support and resources may be very impactful, especially for women with young children.

Another interesting finding to note from the three women with larger, more supportive networks is that they were also the only ones in the study that had consistent employment over

the course of the nine months. The other four women all either changed jobs at least once, or were unemployed for all or a significant portion of that nine months. Additionally, the two women who were unemployed (Natalie and Mara) and the one woman that changed jobs multiple times (Hannah) had the smallest personal networks that were composed primarily of family – Mara’s was all immediate family (parents, siblings, spouses/boyfriends/fathers of children) and one friend; Natalie’s was all immediate family with one professional home visitor; and Hannah’s was all immediate family with three professionals – a doctor, DHS caseworker and a preschool teacher. There did not seem to be a clear pattern among these seven women of the impact of frequency of contact with the alters or race/ethnicity of the network impacting whether the woman felt like she was getting the support she needed from her network. Jamila and Jai’lysa, both African American women, had the most diverse (as measured by race/ethnicity) networks and identified feeling supported by their networks; however Candice, a white woman, had the next most diverse network and responded that she did not feel supported by her network. Despite the difference in feelings of overall support, all women in this study discussed getting at least some emotional support from the people in their networks. This data leads into some possible implications for these findings.

Implications and Conclusion

These findings lend themselves to some very practical changes in practices, as noted above, as well as exploration of policy and advocacy approaches. Important to note is that without the qualitative data, the stories and lived experiences of the families, it may have been concluded that there is great alignment in the system and therefore families are gaining access to what they need. This finding leads to a recommendation that as we measure and seek to conclude whether/how a system or service is effective, that process needs to include input from the people

who have experienced those systems and not just feedback about their experiences but their ideas for how to improve the system overall. Also, as noted by the mothers, there may be ways to streamline or strive to make all entry points equal, in the sense that there is a way for every organization to be able to make known to families the possible resources that the whole network possess, and how to directly gain access to those opportunities, a suggestion from Candice, Jai'lysa and Mara. Or, is there a way to place more than one resource physically in the same place, a suggestion from Jamila. A simple and achievable solution, which some are already doing, is to place information about other resources in waiting rooms or on bulletin boards at doctors' offices or schools or virtually on Facebook or Websites. In Battle Creek some of this is already happening. For example, there is a website (www.tccalhoun.org), not known to any of the women in this study, that does provide referral trees²³. This is a start but still puts a lot of leg work on the families to navigate. Regarding navigation, there are programs that offer navigators and home visitors that meet families where they are and help them navigate these services. Several of the women in this study mentioned a home-visitor as part of their network. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has a Pathways to Potential Program that serves in this type of role. On their website, www.michigan.gov/mdhhs the description of this program very much matches what the families are asking for:

We work one-on-one with families to identify and remove barriers and connect them to a network of services. We know it's not healthy, effective or sustainable for a family to only be involved with DHS on the road to reaching its greatest potential. For that reason, we connect families to entire networks of support so each member has the long-term support they need to reach their goals. Whether it's an algebra tutor for a student

²³ An example of the Early Childhood Referral tree is included the Appendix J.

in the family or a referral to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for career training for a parent, we work with the entire family to build ties to community resources that stay in place long after a family has finished working with DHS.

Another example recently reported by the W.E. Upjohn Institute (March, 2019) in their report, “Building Shared Prosperity: How Communities Can Create Good Jobs for All” they highlight an example in Battle Creek of a Neighborhood Employment Hub Strategy, in partnership with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, where they have placed hubs in key organizations, as determined using data from the American Community Survey, that serve African American and Latino populations whose incomes are below 200 percent of poverty and face significant underemployment. These hubs are located at a church [one associated with New Level Sports] a housing complex and Community Action. This is an example of an attempt to place multiple services in one area and/or to utilize key entry points to help more people gain access to opportunity. This is a new strategy with results starting to positively emerge.

Another area of intervention could be the incorporation of implicit bias training along with institutional measures for achieving equity in their services for the individual organizations in the networks so that front-line workers all the way to executive directors, CEOs are being trained with a lens to reduce inequities in service delivery and have measures in place to see how they are doing in that process.

As noted above, many of the findings and recommendations coming from this study are not necessarily novel, but they are well informed coming directly from what the families in this study say are missing as well as the knowledge that was gained from combining cross-case and social network analysis. However, here we have seven examples of family experiences that have not included the systematic navigation supports, or the other described approaches, but who have

specifically shared would benefit from it, so, there is more work to be done. Some of the gap in access to such services is a resource limitation or a project scope challenge, however this study does support the notion that these types of supports are very important. Also, possibly stating the obvious, while the navigators are helpful to wade through the different opportunities available, might there be a way to make accessing these opportunities less complicated from the outset - Candice provided an example of having all organizations have the same intake application.

Future research could be designed to focus more specifically and directly on the impact of gender, race and class as well as the extent to which culturally appropriate and equitable practices are being implemented within opportunities currently available to women and children. Ultimately to make more drastic improvements that will lead to improved and more equitable experiences for women and children, looking at overall system reform is also necessary. There is some research that does just that by Chaudry, Morrisey, Weiland, and Yohikawa (2017) looking more comprehensively at ways to combat the inequality that exists among children and families in these early years by advocating for key policies that would support approaches such as paid paternal leave, universal preschool and a more vigorous and well-coordinated support system for families with children birth through age three in the most disadvantaged circumstances. Some cities and states have already started to announce and put in place paid leave options for families. I am fully supportive of this type of approach, and also want to recognize the often long timeline of these larger scale efforts. That is why there is value in taking into account some of the more practical and immediate shifts that can be made such as recognizing and better connecting the network capital that already exists within the Informal Networks of women like those in this study and making small but important shifts within Formal Networks, while at the same time advocating for these larger reforms that will help to achieve a society that has in place the types

of supports for women and their children to equitably access the opportunities they need and want for their families and their children.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Provider in the Early Childhood Provider Social Network Analysis

Table 10: List of Providers in the Early Childhood Network

211	First Salem Baptist Church
Altrusa - Kids Campus	Garden of Dream Preschool
Barnes & Noble	Generation E
Battle Creek Area Catholic Schools	Goodwill Industries
Battle Creek Christian Early Learning Center	Grace Health
Battle Creek Community Foundation	Haven of Rest
Battle Creek Police Department	Infant Massage Institute
Battle Creek Public Schools	Kellogg Community College
Battle Creek Unlimited	Lakeview Ford
Battle Creek YMCA	Lakeview School District
BC Pulse	Lemon Tree
BC Pulse	Marshall Academy
Binda Dyslexia Center	Marshall Public Schools
Binda Foundation	Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Bronson Battle Creek	Michigan Works
Burma Center	Milestone Project
Burma Center	National Equity Project
Calhoun County Health Department	New Harvest Church
Calhoun Intermediate School District	New Level Sports Ministries
Camp Fire West Michigan 4C	North Avenue Church
Kellogg Community College	Operation Fit
Chamber of Commerce	Opportunities Exchange
Charitable Union	Parent Coalition
Child Abuse Prevention Fund for Calhoun County	Place-based Evaluators (Drs. Shen & Alford)
Child Care Resources	Ready4K
City of Battle Creek	S.N.A.P. Preschool
Community Action Agency	Sexual Assault Services
Community Fatherhood	Shared Service Alliance
Community Unlimited	Sprout
Denso	Starr Commonwealth
Department of Health & Human Services	Stars and Stripes Learning Station
Early learning Neighborhood Collaborative (Grand Rapids)	Summit Pointe
ERACCE	The ARC of Calhoun County

Fair Housing Center of SW Michigan	The Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi
Family & Children Services	Trinity Lutheran Church
Family & Children Services	United Way
First Congregational Church	Upjohn Institute
Upjohn Institute/Michigan Works	Voces
Urban League of Battle Creek	W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Willard Library	Woodlawn Preschool

Appendix B: Early Childhood Systems Interview Guide for Families

Interview 1:

Start the interview by introducing myself, the purpose of the study, the importance of the study and the value of their participation. Explain how the data will be collected and used. Go over the timeline for the interviews and the purpose of each interview including interview one.

1. General Questions about Child/Children (I want to start with some questions that put the interviewee at ease and gives them a chance just to talk and share what they would like to about their child/children)

- Can you tell me a little bit about your child/children between the ages 3-4?
- What do they like to do? What are they interested in?
- What do you like to do together? Where have you found parenting to be rewarding, challenging, interesting, unexpected?
- What are your aspirations for your child?
- What are your concerns about your child?

2. Basic Questions Regarding Family Demographics/Characteristics

- Ask if I can have access to their preschool application form which includes:
 - name, age, gender, race/ethnicity of interviewee.
 - How many children are in your family? (Name, ages, gender, race/ethnicity)
 - What is your relationship to the child/children?
 - What members of your family reside in the household (Name, age, gender, race/ethnicity, employment, relationship to child/children)
 - Household income?
- How long have you lived in Battle Creek?
- What brought you to Battle Creek?
- What do you like about Battle Creek?
- What do you wish were different about Battle Creek?

3. For someone who doesn't know much about your or your family, how would you describe your family?

- What makes it unique?
- How would others describe your family?

4. How did you get connected to your child's preschool?

- What was that experience like?
- Was that a positive experience for you?
- What made it positive/not positive?

5. Example(s) of an experience navigating the early childhood system:

²⁴**Tell me about an experience(s) you had had when you needed to get a service to support your child? (i.e. needed to find a doctor, a daycare center, etc.)**

- a. Who did you contact? (Name Generator)
- b. Were you able to access what you needed?
- c. Did you share the information with anyone else?
- d. On a scale of 1-3 how valuable was that information?
- e. What could have made that a good experience?
- f. What could have made it a better experience?
- g. Was there any follow-up by you or the contact?
- h. Did this contact refer you to anyone else or an organization?

6. What is a recent decision you've made regarding finding services for your child?

- a. What was the decision-making process?
 - i. [Could be about recent decision, or decisions in general, or old decision].
{initial anxieties, and how addressed}
{when was decision made?}
{how did decision pan out?}
- b. What was the social context in which the decision was made?
{sources of information -- get names & follow up in interviews}
{sources of support get names & follow up in interviews}
{informal pressure from others}
{trading favors – I help you with this if you'll help me with that}

7. What was the most important decision you've made regarding finding services for your child?

- a. What was the decision-making process?
 - i. [Could be about recent decision, or decisions in general, or old decision].
{initial anxieties, and how addressed}
{when was decision made?}
{how did decision pan out?}
- b. What was the social context in which the decision was made?
{sources of information -- get names & follow up in interviews}
{sources of support get names & follow up in interviews}
{informal pressure from others}
{trading favors – I help you with this if you'll help me with that}

²⁴ Some of the questions in the guide may seem redundant but I'm trying to be flexible in how participants prefer to answer questions and recall information. For example, some people remember better through the retelling of a story, others may just be able to list off people/organizations.

8. What would it look like for you to have the ideal situation to provide the services necessary to support your child to be happy, healthy and ready for school? (more time, better transportation, etc.)

- a. How close is this to your reality?
- b. What is missing?

9. What would it look like for you to have the ideal situation to be the type of parent that you envision for yourself?

- a. How close is this to your reality?
- b. What is missing?

Interview 1 and Repeat for Interviews 2 and 3 to continue to update network:

Relationships in the Early Childhood System:

10. Who were the key stakeholders in the early childhood system?

- a. What are the names of people/organizations you come into contact with when you are doing things with or for your child?
- b. Did you reach out to them or did they reach out to you?
- c. What are the names of the organizations or institutions that you go to for information or services for your child or family?
- d. Do you share this information with anyone else?
- e. What do you like to do with your child for fun? Where do you go?

**11. For each person/organization listed at each interview, follow-up with the name-
interpreter phase of questioning.**

- a. Gender
- b. Age
- c. Race/ethnicity
- d. Occupation
- e. Relationship to the family
- f. Geographic location

12. Specific Information about Nature of Relationship and Resources Exchanged For each person/organization

- a. Frequency of contact (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly)
- b. Does this person/organization also come to you for support (yes/no)
- c. Do you go to this person/organization for help with every day matters?
- d. Do you go to this person/organization only in an emergency?

13. Show the family the Early Childhood Provider Organization List and ask the following questions:

- Are there organizations here you are familiar with?
- For each organization:
 - Frequency of contact (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly)
 - Does this person/organization also come to you for support (yes/no)
 - Do you go to this person/organization for help with every day matters?
 - Do you go to this person/organization only in an emergency?
 - If applicable -**For each organization if specific people were the main contact:**
 - i. Gender
 - ii. Age
 - iii. Race/ethnicity
 - iv. Occupation
 - Did you reach out to them or did they reach out to you?
 - If they reached out to you how did they do it?
 - What was your experience like?
 - Over what period of time did you connect with them?
 - Did you get the services you needed?
 - Did they refer you to any additional organizations/services/programs?
 - Did anyone follow up with you to see if you made contact with that referral?
- Do you see any gaps or organizations you are familiar with that should be included?
- Are there any organizations that you are not familiar with or have not interacted with? Why?

14. Additional learning/examples

Are there any other examples, experiences you would like to share?

Interview 3 will primarily be adding anything we've missed and member checking

15. Are there any new organizations that you have gone to recently?

16. How did you come to that organization?

17. Go over organization list again and ask:

- a. How did you come to this organization?
- b. Did they refer you to any other organization?
- c. What was your interaction with this organization?

18. Show the family the Network Provider Map and ask - What is your overall reaction to the Early Childhood Provider Network?

- Are you surprised by how the organizations seem to be connected and interacting?
- What do you make of this?

19. What was the most important decision you've made regarding finding services for your child?

- a. What was the decision-making process?
 - i. [Could be about recent decision, or decisions in general, or old decision].
{initial anxieties, and how addressed}
{when was decision made?}
{how did decision pan out?}
- b. What was the social context in which the decision was made?
{sources of information -- get names & follow up in interviews}
{sources of support get names & follow up in interviews}
{informal pressure from others}
{trading favors – I help you with this if you'll help me with that}

20. Review the data collected to date regarding the family network created based on our prior conversations and their activity logs and ask the following questions:

- Now that you see this are we missing people/organizations?
- Is there anything that does not look accurate?
- How does your network interact with the formal network?
- Do you feel like you are getting the support you need from your network? From the provider network?

Appendix C: Activity Log

Activities with your child or for your child (such as doctor appointments, play groups, trips to the library, haircuts, church groups, etc.)

Date	Activity	Location	People	How did you find out about activity	Value of activity 1 very valuable 2 neutral 3 not valuable

Appendix D: Mission/Vision Statements of Available Organizations

Table 11: Mission/Vision Statements of Available Organizations

Organization	Mission	Vision
211 (Program. Of United Way)	United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good.	United Way advances the common good by creating opportunities for all. Our focus is on education, income and health—the building blocks for a good quality of life and a strong community. (FOCUS)
Altrusa - Kids Campus	Kids Campus functions as a non-profit organization. Kids Campus is committed to providing quality child care enhanced by educational learning experiences specially meant for children at affordable prices.	At Kids Campus, we have a program designed to promote social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and language development in your child. Our philosophy fosters growth for every child, encouraging creativity, independence, and a sense of responsibility.
Barnes & Noble		Barnes & Noble is a company driven by the principle that bookselling is important work. We believe a great bookstore is also a reflection of its community. We pioneered the concept of a retail store as a community center, and annually host approximately 100,000 community events nationwide. Our events enrich the minds of readers of all ages, and raise funds for local schools and literary and cultural organizations.
Battle Creek Area Catholic Schools	Battle Creek Area Catholic Schools, in partnership with parents, community and the Catholic Church, provide students with an excellent education and a solid faith formation. Students will know the Faith, share the Faith and live the Faith.	Students are engaged in a meaningful, relevant and secure learning environment that utilizes current, state-of-the-art resources. We inspire, excite, and challenge a diverse student population to reach their potential. As the times change, we adapt and grow, always focusing on the most important part of what we do: creating and implementing Christ-centered, nurturing, and disciplined education programs.
Battle Creek Christian Early Learning Center	Battle Creek Christian Early Learning Center is designed to meet the developmental needs of infants, toddlers, young children, and school-age children. The Center provides a safe, healthy, Christian environment. It also provides experiences that enrich and enhance each child's cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical, creative, and spiritual development. The Center provides a safe, healthy, Christian environment. It also provides experiences that enrich and enhance each child's cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical, creative, and spiritual development. Using	Battle Creek Christian Early Learning Center is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with Calvary Baptist Church in Battle Creek. Though separate organizations, Battle Creek Christian Early Learning Center shares the core beliefs and ministry philosophy of Calvary Baptist Church.

	Christian principles to guide the daily activities, the Staff serves as positive role models and provides care that is supportive, warm, nurturing, and responsive to each child’s individual needs. The Center respects families as the primary and most important providers of care and nurturing, believing that parents and caregivers are partners in children’s care.	
Battle Creek Community Foundation	Our Mission: “We promote giving, build endowment, and provide leadership to improve quality of life.”	
Battle Creek Police Department	To ensure a safe, prosperous and culturally enriched community.	We envision Battle Creek as an extraordinary community where people choose to live, work and play.
Battle Creek Public Schools	We engage, empower, and collaborate to educate and prepare every Bearcat for college, career, and life as a global citizen.	100% success for every Bearcat.
Battle Creek Unlimited	assisting new and growing companies or those looking to relocate to find resources they need to build their business.	
Battle Creek YMCA	To put Christian Principles into Practice through Programs that build healthy Spirit, Mind and Body for all.	We build Strong Kids, Strong Families, Strong Communities.
BC Pulse	to connect, leverage, support, and align current and future system change efforts to better meet the needs of children and families.	to create systems change to ensure that every child in Battle Creek has equal opportunity to experience quality early learning, health, economic security, safety & nurturing care.
Binda Dyslexia Center	To address the dyslexia learning disabilities of eligible elementary and secondary school students in the Battle Creek, MI area, by engaging and training tutors who will provide dyslexia specific tutoring to students who exhibit dyslexia characteristics by using the Barton reading and spelling system.	
Binda Foundation		We value inclusiveness and seek diversity to ensure that a range of perspectives, opinions, and experiences are recognized and acted upon in pursuit of the Foundation's mission. The Binda Foundation values differences among individuals including, but not limited to, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, race and physical ability
Bronson Battle Creek	Together, we advance the health of our communities	An exceptional healthcare experience for every person, every time
Burma Center	We empower Burmese Americans through advocacy, community engagement, and education.	The Burma Center is a beacon of hope to the Burmese community. It is where dreams are built and lives are

		transformed. We help our community members reach their full human potential.
Calhoun County Health Department	"Enhance our community's total well-being by promoting healthy lifestyles, protecting health, and preventing disease."	"The healthiest community for life and living.
Calhoun Intermediate School District		
Camp Fire West Michigan 4C	Camp Fire West Michigan 4C's purpose is to provide opportunities for children and youth, and for those who care for them, so that they can realize their potential and become caring, self-directed individuals, responsible to themselves and others. Further, we provide resources and support for continuous program quality improvement and work to improve those conditions in society that affect children, youth and their families.	Camp Fire works to realize the dignity and worth of each individual and to eliminate human barriers based on all assumptions that prejudice individuals. Designed and implemented to reduce sexual, racial, religious, and cultural stereotypes and to foster positive intercultural relationships, in Camp Fire, everyone is welcome.
Chamber of Commerce	The Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce will provide the best in member services and aggressive business advocacy to create a climate for employer growth and a prosperous community for all.	The Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce is the premier business association whose influence, solutions, and networks drive economic growth in the Battle Creek area, enabling businesses, community and people to prosper in an ever-changing economy.
Charitable Union	Provide clothing, bedding and small household items at no charge and connect people to resources in the community.	To contribute to human dignity
Child Abuse Prevention Fund for Calhoun County	The CAPF for Calhoun County Inc. exists to raise money for positive parenting activities in order to prevent child abuse and neglect.	
Child Care Resources	To promote quality care and education for all children by connecting providers and families with community and resources.	It is our vision that child care resources will be the community resource to providers as well as families related to childcare including: Referral, training, education and advocacy
City of Battle Creek	To ensure a safe, prosperous and culturally enriched community.	We envision Battle Creek as an extraordinary community where people choose to live, work and play.
Community Action Agency	"Dedicated to helping people achieve and maintain independence."	Caring - We believe in treating all people with dignity and respect. We believe all people can achieve success. Service-We believe in meeting the individual needs of those we serve. We believe in providing responsive and supportive services. Action-We believe in being responsible and trustworthy stewards of our resources. We believe in immediate action to prevent and resolve problems. We believe in being an active community partner.

Community Fatherhood	To provide training, resources and support to fathers and father figures to impact the lives of children in the community	A community where every child has a “positive” father or father figure involved in their lives
Community Unlimited	Providing enriching opportunities for children and their families, with a focus on early childhood.	Uniting generations, building strong communities.
Denso	DENSO is built on a foundation of Kaizen (continuous improvement). Everything can be improved and nothing is insignificant.	We look to the future to see how we can use our expertise to transform mobility.
Department of Health & Human Services	Enhance our community's total well-being by promoting healthy lifestyles, protecting health, and preventing disease."	The healthiest community for life and living.
Early learning Neighborhood Collaborative (Grand Rapids)	"The Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative will create, provide and support targeted neighborhood collaborative partners with technical, developmental and educational resources and increase the accessibility of early childhood education for vulnerable children through advocacy."	We envision a community where all children, regardless of the neighborhood in which they live, are able to thrive developmentally and educationally allowing them to fully embrace their potential and become self-sufficient adults.
ERACCE	The mission of ERACCE is to eliminate systemic racism and build antiracist multicultural diversity within Michigan institutions by providing education, networking, technical assistance, and supportive resources to the region.	The vision of ERACCE is a state of Michigan in which all institutions are fully inclusive and transformed, and exist within a fully inclusive and transformed society. In this vision, all institutions and the wider community have overcome systemic racism and all institutional life reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural, and economic groups in determining mission, structure, constituency, policies and practices. There is full participation in decisions that shape the institution, and inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interests. There is a sense of restored community and humanity.
Fair Housing Center of SW Michigan	The Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan is committed to furthering fair housing efforts by promoting fair and equal housing opportunities for its residents. It is committed to highlighting the Fair Housing Laws, including Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 and Michigan’s Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act of 1976. By continuing to address discrimination in our communities and supporting programs that educate the public about the right to equal housing opportunities, the Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan strives to protect everyone’s right to choose	

	housing free from any and all unlawful discrimination.	
Family & Children Services	To support, strengthen, and preserve the safety, well-being, and dignity of children, individuals, and families.	
First Congregational Church	United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.	United in Christ's love, a just world for all.
First Salem Baptist Church		17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[a] The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.
Garden of Dream Preschool	We are a loving, stimulating, and diverse preschool and child care community in downtown Battle Creek, nourishing the minds, bodies, and spirits of children from six weeks to five years old.	
Generation E	Closed	
Goodwill Industries	Our mission is to improve the community. We do this by providing employment, education, training and support services tailored to individual needs.	Self-sufficiency for everyone.
Grace Health	To provide patient-centered healthcare with excellence in quality, service, and access.	A community in which all people achieve their full potential for health and well-being across the lifespan. We work to be trusted by patients, a valued partner in the community, and creators of positive change.
Haven of Rest	<u>To proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ so that all may experience God's love. Clothe, feed, and shelter the homeless in the name of Christ. Disciple individuals to become spiritually, physically, and emotionally functional, and able to live optimally within God's kingdom and the community.</u>	

Infant Massage Institute	The mission of the Infant Massage Institute, Inc.™ is to reach to the heart of parenting, elevating and enhancing each person's purpose and cultural traditions through infant massage, promoting healthy infant, child, and family development while strengthening the family unit and bonding process, so each child may thrive and reach his or her maximum innate potential.	The vision of the Infant Massage Institute, Inc.™ is to empower children, as well as professionals working with families, through education, training and ongoing research so that all children recognize that they are loved, valued and respected.
Kellogg Community College	We are dedicated to providing accessible, high-quality education to enrich our community and the lives of individual learners.	
Lakeview Ford	"Lakeview Ford-Lincoln: Where Community Matters - New and Used Cars in Battle Creek, MI"	
Lakeview School District	The purpose of the Lakeview School District Board of Education is to represent the public's interest in providing educational programs in a safe learning environment that develop knowledgeable, healthy, socially responsible citizens that can live and work in a global society.	
Lemon Tree	To put Christian Principles into Practice through Programs that build healthy Spirit, Mind and Body for all.	We build Strong Kids, Strong Families, Strong Communities.
Marshall Academy	As members of the Marshall Academy community, we pledge our best efforts to create and maintain a disciplined learning environment based upon traditional moral values, while assuring mastery of the classic fundamentals of learning and challenging our students to excel in their given talents.	Marshall Academy is prominent in the community for its unique culture of moral and academic excellence. The Academy's challenging classical curriculum results in competent and compassionate students with the ability to reason and articulate. Marshall Academy welcomes parents as full partners in the education of their children. All members of the Academy community cooperate in maintaining the Academy's commitment to high moral, behavioral, and academic standards.
Marshall Public Schools		Marshall Public Schools is a partnership of school employees, parents, community members and students working together to develop life-long learners who have the knowledge, skills, abilities and habits necessary to succeed in the larger world.
Michigan Economic Development Corporation	The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, in collaboration with more than 100 economic development partners, markets Michigan as the place to do business, assists businesses in their growth strategies, and fosters the growth of vibrant communities across the state.	
Michigan Works	Economic Prosperity. Everyone works!	Developing essential, professional, development to our members and partners

Mylestone Project		
National Equity Project	Deliver on the promise of a quality education.	
New Harvest Church	To each the unreached.	
New Level Sports Ministries	Our mission is to maximize and balance the intellectual, spiritual, mental and physical elements of all participating student-athletes.	We are committed to assisting our student-athletes to develop purpose driven lives through participation in educational enrichment, personal growth and physical development activities.
North Avenue Church	“Grow in Faith, Serve People, Together!”	We believe that the best way to accomplish this mission is to build real, honest relationships with others.
Operation Fit		The main goals for Operation Fit are to increase physical activity, improve the nutrition and lunchroom environment, and to create supportive environments for all children so they can begin healthy habits early on.
Opportunities Exchange	Our mission is rooted in the concept that building adult capabilities improves child outcomes. We seek to facilitate change across the early care and education (ECE) system on two levels: by providing technical assistance to ECE providers interested in transforming the business of early care and education to improve child outcomes, and by shaping public policy and finance to incentivize high quality, sustainable ECE for young children. We believe that the formation of Shared Service Alliances enables ECE providers to build and sustain strong organizations, in which they are able to focus on their mission, create positive work environments and growth opportunities for staff, and offer high-quality early learning services.	
Parent Coalition	Connect, Learn and Build...Strong Families for Calhoun County...Supporting Calhoun County's Youngest Community Members	
Ready4K	Ready4K is a community of learners who are passionate about supporting families to ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive in life.	
S.N.A.P. Preschool	closed in 2016	
Sexual Assault Services	MCEDSV is dedicated to the empowerment of all the state's survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Our mission is to develop and promote efforts aimed at the	MCEDSV is Michigan's catalyst for creating empowered and transformed individuals, communities, and societies committed to building a lasting legacy of equality, peace and social justice, where domestic and sexual violence no longer exists.

	elimination of all domestic and sexual violence in Michigan.	
Shared Service Alliance		
Sprout	Provide access to high quality, locally produced food goods for all community residents, and help provide local farmers and producers a market for their goods.	Increased food access for all residents. Youth engagement in our local food system at all levels. Be fun and flexible. Food sovereignty is at the core of our work, ensuring that we increase the ownership of our food system amongst all residents.
Starr Commonwealth	Starr Commonwealth leads with courage to create positive experiences so that all children, families, and communities flourish.	Universal hope, boundless love, and limitless success for all children.
Stars and Stripes Learning Station	We at Young Child Associates strive to make families feel at ease when you leave your child(ren) in our care. Qualified teachers provide developmentally appropriate practices to enhance the learning of all children that attend our programs.	
Summit Pointe	Helping individuals build inner strength, exceed all expectations and enjoy the happiness they deserve is our goal.	
The ARC of Calhoun County	The mission of The Arc of Calhoun County is to ensure that people with developmental disabilities are valued and respected in order that they and their families can participate fully in and contribute to their community.	
The Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi	To act as a forum for member tribes; To advocate for member tribes in the development of programs and policies which will improve the economy, education, and quality of life for Michigan's Native Americans; and To provide technical assistance to member tribes, assisting in the development of tribal regulations, ordinances, and policies applicable to health and human services.	
Trinity Lutheran Church	We believe God created all of humanity in God's image. Since every person is made in the image of God, every person is part of God's family. Whatever your gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race, income, mental or physical ability, age, religious background, nationality, or political ideology, you are welcome here.	Trinity Lutheran Church is a gathering of God's people, anchored in the Post neighborhood, reflecting God's freeing power to our congregation, our neighborhood, and the wider community.

	Diversity of skills, gifts, talents, opinions, and experiences are what strengthen the body of Christ. “For all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28b).	
United Way	Drive impact by leading shared efforts that engage diverse people, ideas and resources.	A vibrant community where all people realize their full potential.
Upjohn Institute/Michigan Works	The Upjohn Institute is unique in bringing research, operations and dissemination together within one organization.	
Urban League of Battle Creek	Built to Prosper: Empowering Children through creative programs	The primary purpose of the Urban League Guild is to support the implementation of programs offered by the Urban League. They also provide service to the community through civic, cultural, educational and social activities.
Voces	To promote an inclusive society by providing Latino/ Hispanic families with opportunities and resources that lead to individual and community transformation.	The Latino/ Hispanic community reaches its full potential and is united and engaged in the economic, social, cultural and civic life of the greater Battle Creek community.
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	The W.K. Kellogg Foundation supports children, families and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society.	We envision a nation that marshals its resources to assure that all children have an equitable and promising future-a nature in which all children thrive.
Willard Library	We create a community of readers and a world of possibilities.	A proud, inspired Battle Creek.
Woodlawn Preschool	Woodlawn Preschool strives to develop creative thinking skills and a lasting love of learning by fulfilling the unique and individual needs of each student at his or her stage of development. We provide a caring atmosphere of learning in which capable, compassionate staff members positively facilitate social, emotional, intellectual and physical growth, enhance self-esteem and prepare our students for future learning.	

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Figure 20: Key Words in Mission/Vision Statements

Key Word in Mission/Vision Statement				
Org Name	Children/Family/Parent	Community	Equity/Diversity/Culture/ Discrimination/Justice	Zip Code
211				49017
Altrusa				49037
Barnes & Noble				49015
Battle Creek Area Catholic Schools				49015
Battle Creek Christian Early Learning Center				49017
Battle Creek Community Foundation				49017
Battle Creek Police Department				49014
Battle Creek Public Schools				49017
Battle Creek Unlimited				49037
Battle Creek YMCA				49017
BC Pulse				49017
Binda Dyslexia Center				49017
Binda Foundation				49017
Bronson Battle Creek				49017
Burma Center				49037
Calhoun County Health Department				49014
Calhoun Intermediate School District				49017
Camp Fire West Michigan 4C				49503
Chamber of Commerce				49017
Charitable Union				49017
Child Abuse Prevention Fund for Calhoun County				49017
Child Care Resources of Southwest Michigan				49002
City of Battle Creek				49014
Community Action Agency				49014
Community Fatherhood				49014
Community Unlimited				49094
Denso				49037
Department of Health & Human Services				49014
Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative (Grand Rapids)				49051
ERACCE				
Fair Housing Center of SW Michigan				49007
Family and Children Services				49015
Family Enrichment Center				49015
First Congregational Church				49017
First Salem Baptist Church				49015
Garden of Dream Preschool				49017
Goodwill Industries				49014
Grace Health				49037
Haven of Rest				49014
Infant Massage Institute				49037
Kellogg Community College				49017
Lakeview Ford				49037
Lakeview School District				49015
Lemon Tree Preschool				49017
Marshall Academy				49068
Marshall Public School				49068
Michigan Economic Development Corporation				48913
Michigan Works				49017
Milestone Project				
National Equity Project				94612
New Harvest Church				49017
New Level Sports Ministries				49037
North Avenue Church				49017
Operation Fit				49017
Opportunities Exchange				
Other				
Parent Coalition				49068
Place-based Evaluators (Drs. Shen & Alford)				
Ready4K				
S.N.A.P. Preschool				
Sexual Assault Services				49037
Shared Service Alliance				49017
Sprout				49037
Starr Commonwealth				49224
Stars and Stripes Learning Station				49037
Summit Pointe				49017
The ARC of Calhoun County				49015
The Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi				49052
Trinity Lutheran Church				49014
United Way				49017
Upjohn Institute				49007
Urban League of Battle Creek				49037
Voces				49037
W.K. Kellogg Foundation				49017
Willard Library				49017
Woman's Co-op				49014
Woodlawn Preschool				49015

Appendix E: Additional Statistics for Core Cluster Organizations

This table below is a more detailed view of the statistics listed above used to describe the intermediary organization. This includes data for all organization in the core.

Table 12 - The Result of Ego Network Analysis for Core Cluster

Question 1: I exchange information, documents, schedule, and other resources with a person in the following organization(s) to get my job done

Organization	Size	Ties	Pairs	Density	pWeakComp	2StepReach	2StepPct	Broker	nBroker	EgoBetween	nEgoBetween
Calhoun Intermediate School District	72	709	5112	13.86932755	1.388888836	76	98.70130157	2201.5	0.8613067	285.885437	5.592438221
BC Pulse	70	661	4830	13.68529987	1.428571463	76	98.70130157	2084.5	0.863147	370.8255615	7.677547932
Other	61	641	3660	17.51366043	3.278688431	76	98.70130157	1509.5	0.8248634	27.49583244	0.751252294
Goodwill Industries	56	572	3080	18.5714283	1.785714269	76	98.70130157	1254	0.8142857	74.17343903	2.408228397
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	52	548	2652	20.66365051	1.923076868	76	98.70130157	1052	0.7933635	185.682663	7.001608849
Calhoun County Health Department	45	488	1980	24.6464653	2.222222328	76	98.70130157	746	0.7535353	117.4736633	5.933013439
Battle Creek Community Foundation	39	467	1482	31.51147079	2.56410265	76	98.70130157	507.5	0.6848853	80.22724915	5.413444519
Battle Creek Public Schools	39	419	1482	28.27260399	2.56410265	76	98.70130157	531.5	0.717274	86.29350281	5.822773457
Community Action Agency	36	384	1260	30.47619057	2.777777672	76	98.70130157	438	0.6952381	53.60144806	4.254083157
Department of Health & Human Services	34	401	1122	35.73974991	2.941176414	76	98.70130157	360.5	0.6426025	41.11947632	3.664837599
Grace Health	33	340	1056	32.19696808	3.030303001	76	98.70130157	358	0.6780303	43.95129776	4.162055016

Size. The number of actors (alters) that ego is directly connected to.

Ties. The total number of ties in the ego network (not counting ties involving ego).

Pairs. The total number of pairs of alters in the ego network -- i.e., potential ties.

Density. The number of ties divided by the number of pairs, times 100.

pWeakComp. The number of weak components as a percentage of the number of alters.

2StepReach. The number of nodes ego can reach within two steps divided by the number of nodes in the network excluding ego.

Broker. The number of times ego lies on the shortest path between two alters (i.e., the number of pairs of alters that are not directly connected).

nBroker. The previous measure normalized by number of brokerage opportunities, which is a function of ego network size.

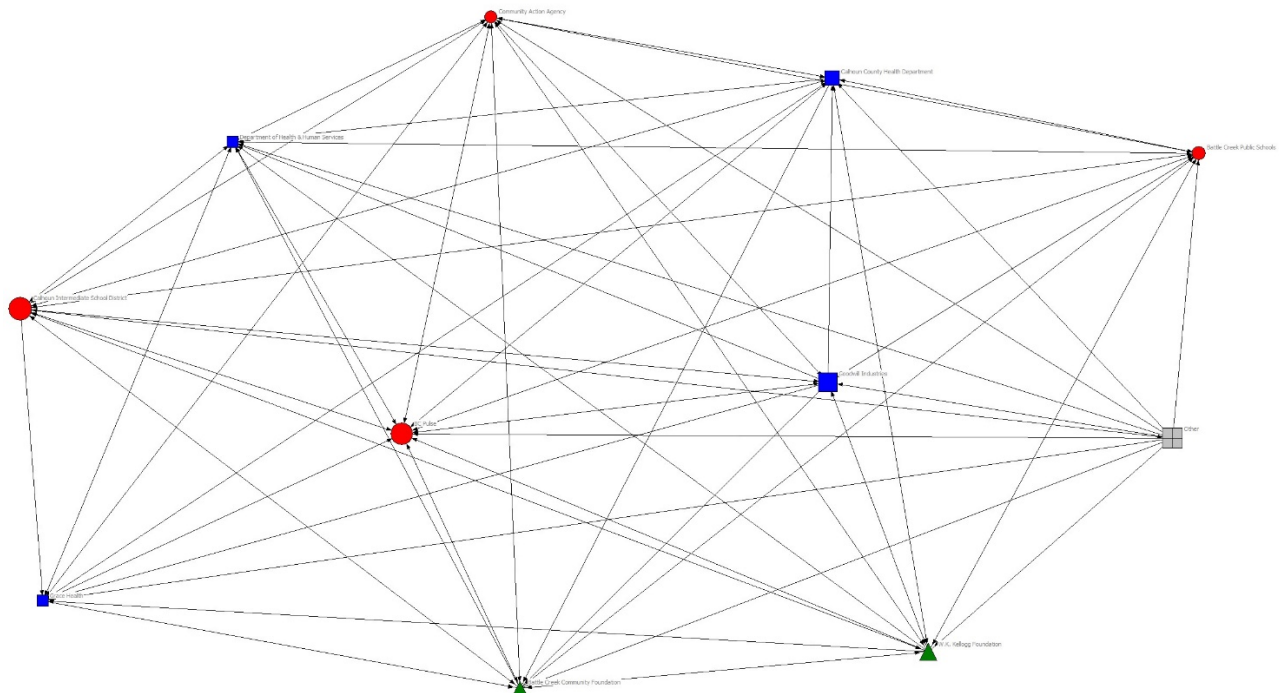
EgoBetweenness. The sum of ego's proportion of times ego lies on the shortest path between each pair of alters. For alters connected to each other, the contribution to betweenness of that pair is 0, for alters connected to each other only through ego, the contribution is 1, for alters connected through ego and one or more other alters, the contribution is $1/k$, where k is the number of nodes which connects that pair of alters.

nEgoBetweenness. Ego Betweenness normalized by a function of the number of nodes in the ego network.

Appendix F: Secondary, Tertiary, and Quaternary Clusters

Question 1. I exchange information, documents, schedule, and other resources with a person in the following organization(s) to get my job done.

Figure 21 Network of Organizations for Core Cluster



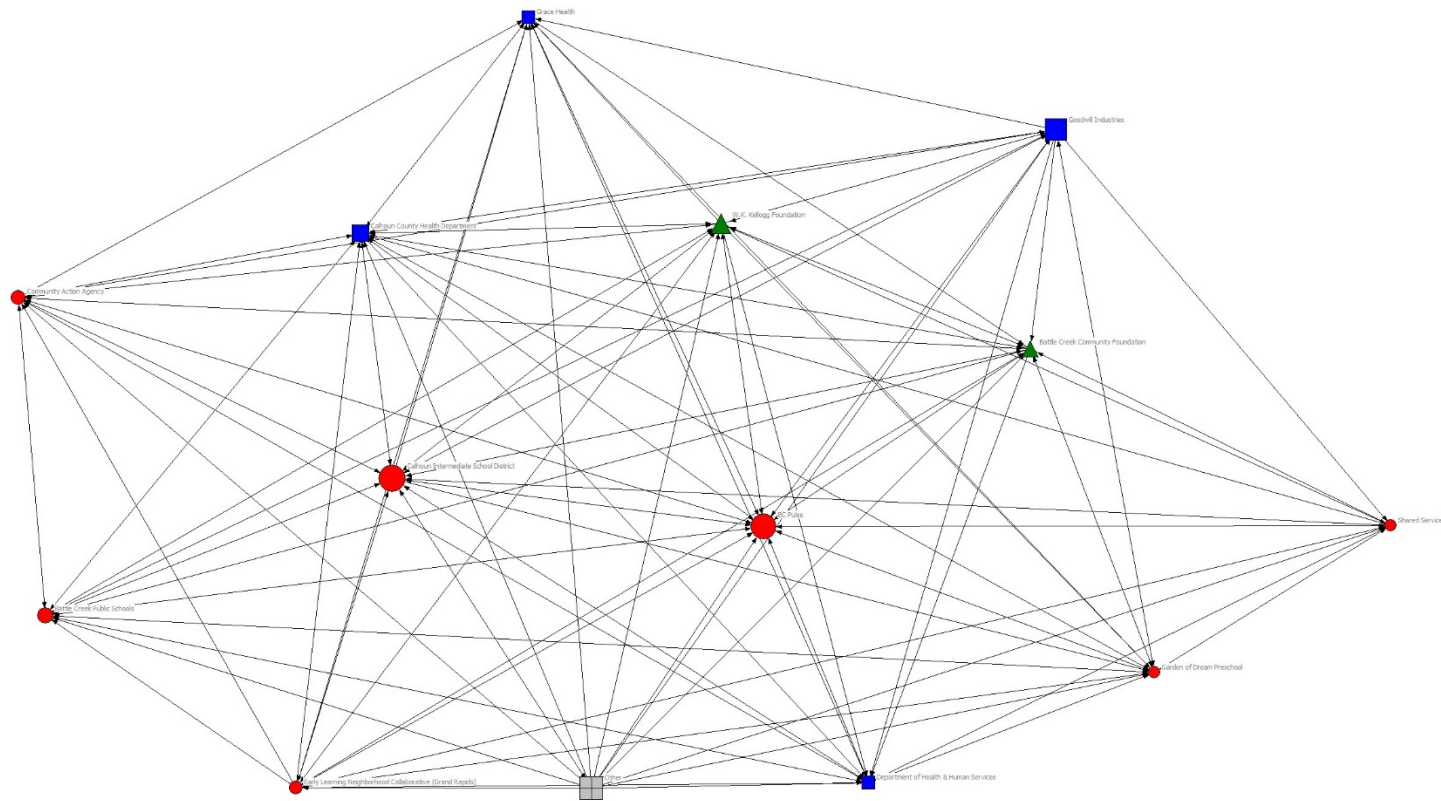
Note.1. The Core Cluster is composed of organizations that have 33 or more degree in this network.

2.Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: place-based evaluator and others.

3.This diagram takes into account the frequency of the interactions between organization. The larger size of the symbol indicates a higher degree of centrality. The frequency was used to calculate the centrality.

4. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of connections.

Figure 22 Network of Organizations for Secondary Cluster



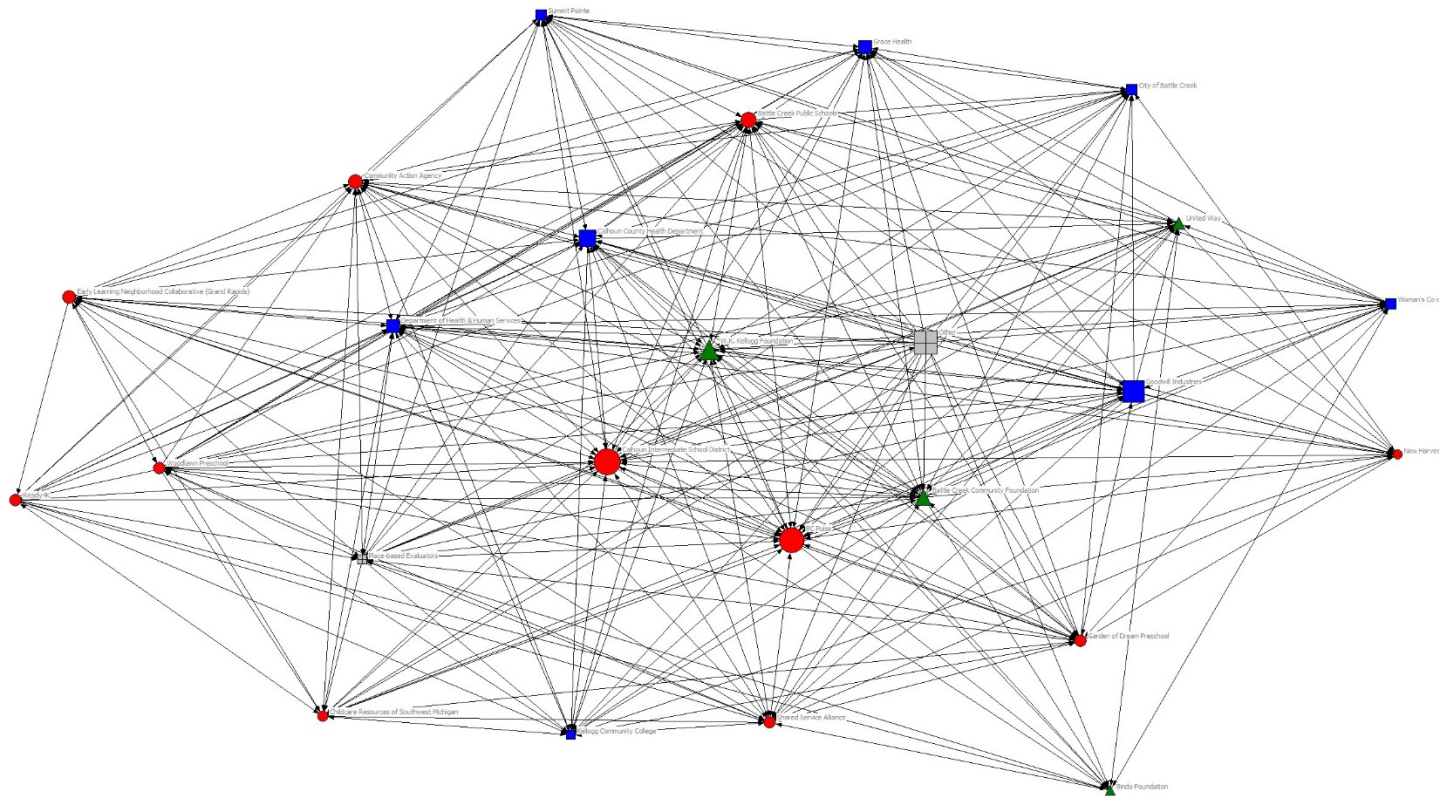
Note.1. The Secondary Cluster is composed of organizations that have 30 or more degree in this network.

2.Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: place-based evaluator and others.

3.This diagram takes into account the frequency of the interactions between organization. The larger size of the symbol indicates a higher degree of centrality. The frequency was used to calculate the centrality.

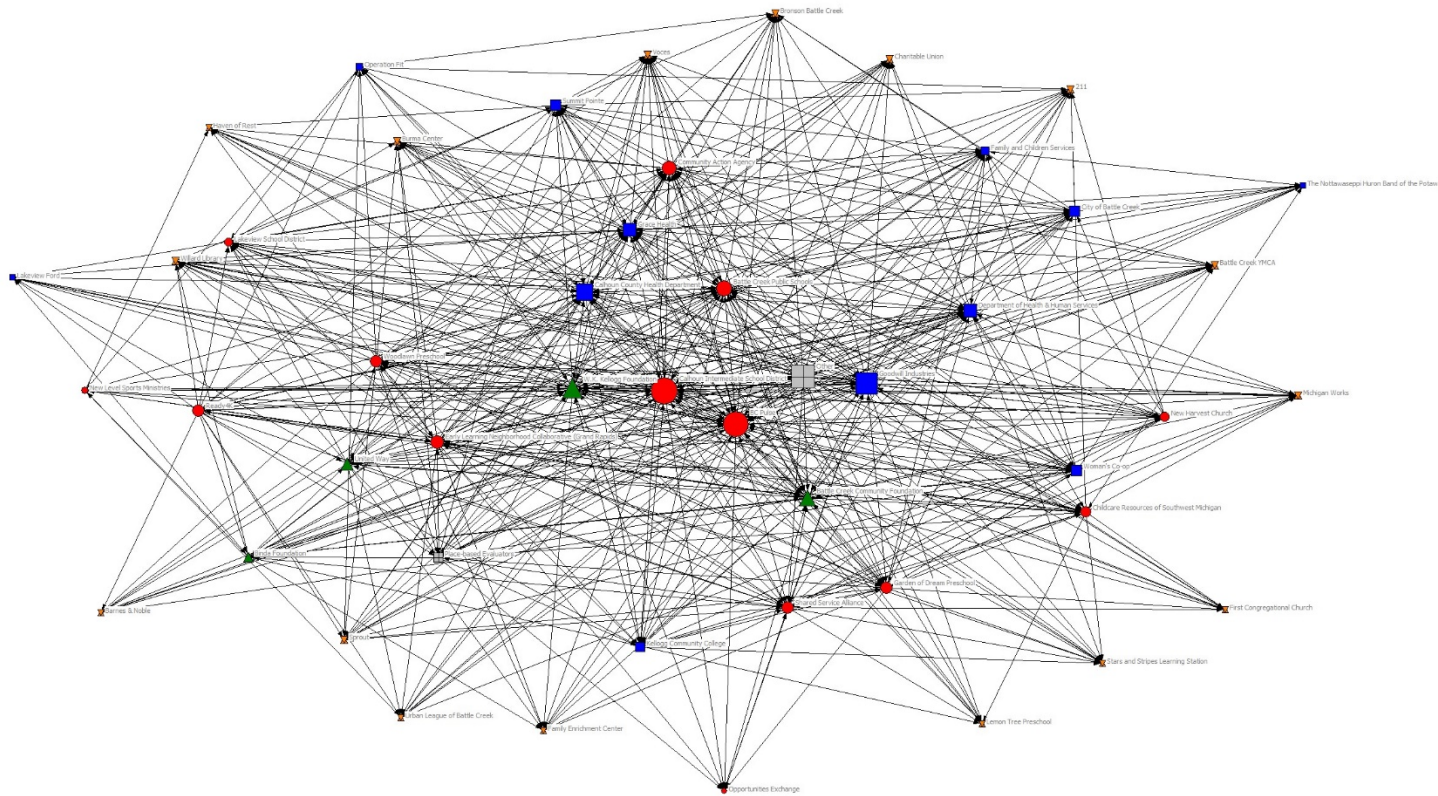
4. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of connections.

Figure 23 Network of Organizations for Tertiary Cluster



- Note.1. The Tertiary Cluster is composed of organizations that have 20 or more degree in this network.
- 2.Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: place-based evaluator and others.
- 3.This diagram takes into account the frequency of the interactions between organization. The larger size of the symbol indicates a higher degree of centrality. The frequency was used to calculate the centrality.
4. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of connections.

Figure 24 Network of Organizations for Quaternary Cluster



- Note.1. The Quaternary Cluster is composed of organizations that have 10 or more degree in this network.
- 2.Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: place-based evaluator and others.
- 3.This diagram takes into account the frequency of the interactions between organization. The larger size of the symbol indicates a higher degree of centrality. The frequency was used to calculate the centrality.
4. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of connections.

Appendix G: Full Case Study Write-up for Each Family

Case 1 – Emily²⁵, Cody and Derek

Family Overview

Emily is a 25-year-old single-mom with two son's Cody, 3 and Derek, 5. Her income is below 250% poverty and both she and her sons identify as white. She works part time as a contracted employee in a business setting, which she considers "super flexible" and allows her time to volunteer at her sons' schools. Her son Cody has been attending Preschool Center 1 since he was two years old. Emily describes her family as "close-nit". "We like to explore and do activities. Everybody is social. We like to meet other families, and do playdates, and stuff like that. I would say we are active in the community". She meets a lot of people on Facebook. Emily helps with Picture Day and other types of opportunities at Preschool Center 1. She is also involved in her son Derek's school and serves on the PTA.

Emily describes herself as a "very resourceful person". She finds many of her resources online by Googling and using Facebook on her phone. "There are different groups on Facebook that are helpful for families that are financially unstable." One specific group is called the Help and Hopes Closet "It's run by this little old lady, and everyone just donates stuff to her house. It's kind of like Goodwill, but it's all free, so you just take stuff to her house, and then, she sorts it out, and people come and get it. It's really awesome. And then, also, in general, there is always a lot of information people post, like jobs, and all kinds of stuff on that page."

Getting Connected to Preschool

When asked to retell the story of how Emily got Cody connected with preschool she started by sharing, "this is a really weird story". Cody and Derek were going to a home daycare provider from the time they were born. When the home daycare provider went on maternity leave, Emily was concerned she might not resume her business and that's when Emily decided to look for a more structured and long-term option for the boys. She had heard of a daycare center and gave them a call only to find out that she had accidentally called Preschool Center 1 instead. Once Emily visited Preschool Center 1 she "ended up loving it" and decided not to pursue the original center she thought she was contacting. She likes the fact that it is close to her home and that Derek, who is in kindergarten, can go there in the summer for care.

²⁵ The names of all people in this study are pseudonyms or non-identifying names such as Mom, Dad, etc. to protect the identities of the people in this study.

The transition from a home daycare to the Preschool Center 1 was financially a change for Emily. She was receiving the Department of Health and Human Services Childcare Subsidy support which was covering the home daycare, but she had to pay an additional \$50 per week, or about \$200 per month for Cody to attend. Emily reflects positively, however, on the transition, “I love all the girls here. ... They are accredited here with NAEYC Accreditation, and then, obviously, through the state, licensed... I think just going from a home daycare to a center, where it's like a real school, and they're going to be learning and sitting at desks.” Emily had a very positive experience with a particular teacher and classroom within the center and is hoping that Cody will have the same experience; however, Cody is in a different classroom because Emily now qualifies for state-funded preschool (GSRP - the Great Start Readiness Program) and she did not with Derek.

I like the GSRP room, as far as it being government-regulated, and they have to follow specific standardized testing. So, I guess we will have to wait and see if it works out, but I definitely think they follow the same type of thing in here. ...So, I think just being in a center allows more socialization, which is really important for kindergarten. So, I think having him there was my biggest thing. When people would ask me, ‘Before your kid goes to kindergarten, what do you think?’ - they need to be in preschool. We need to put him in some kind of standardized preschool, where there are a bunch of kids, so they can learn what it's like to be in a school.

Reflections on Experience as a Parent

When asked to reflect on what she found rewarding, challenging and/or surprising as a parent, Emily shared:

Rewarding, I would definitely say just the joy that these two kids look to me for everything, like I'm their whole world, being a single parent. It's rewarding, definitely in that. Just being able to teach them everything they know, like everything that they are comes from me. So, that's cool. Hard, I would say keeping them active, and I guess making sure that they're in some kind of sport, or doing something all the time. I think nowadays, with technology, it's easy to just come home and play on your iPads, or watch TV, or whatever, but making sure that they're doing activities.

An unexpected challenge of being a parent are the expenses. Emily shared that diapers and wipes were a big expense and that both of her boys were potty-trained before their second birthdays:

I know everyone says that kids are so expensive, but you don't think about it until you get into it, especially having two. One is enough, but two kids playing soccer, two kids doing swimming... But again, the nice thing about having two boys is hand-me-downs, and all those things, even with their Halloween costumes. Cody said he wanted to be a Power Ranger this year. Derek was a Power Ranger last year. So, I said, ‘Yeah, you could totally be a Power Ranger! I don't want to spend \$30 on a costume! That's awesome!’ And like I said, they're so close, so he wants to be like his brother. He wants to do similar things.

Aspirations for Cody

Emily is hoping that Cody will have the same positive experience in pre-K that Derek had and that he will like school just as much:

I hope, with Cody, that he gets to that same level of just writing, colors, and shapes, and the whole thing. And he needs to work on his speech, so speech will definitely be a thing when he gets into kindergarten, or whenever they start that...I hope that he likes school, and that he does well. I can already see from my five-year-old that he loves kindergarten, so I think he'll do well. I just hope that Cody does the same, because there are a lot of differences.

Living in Battle Creek

Emily has lived in Battle Creek her whole life. Her parents now live in Colon in the summers and Florida in the winters. According to Emily, “not a whole lot” has kept her in Battle Creek, but she does like the school district that Derek attends. She does not live in the district and had to use school of choice to enroll her son. She characterized her experience with enrollment as a “mess.” She explained that they signed up in May, but there were too many students interested in the limited spaces, so there was a lottery. They didn’t find out that Derek was able to enroll until the Friday before school started. When asked if there was anyone who was helpful in navigating the school choice process, Emily shared it was more family like her aunt who was a school teacher her whole life. Also, Emily’s second cousin is a bus driver for the district and also supported that choice. Elizabeth’s family has been supportive of her selection to send Cody and Derek to the district because that was where they all went to school and that is where their children go. Her brother and sister-in-law live in the district and her children could always ride the bus home to their house. Cody is getting ready to head to kindergarten next year, and according to Emily getting him enrolled was the most important decision she has made recently. He will be attending the same school as his older brother.

Emily has concerns about the Battle Creek community in general. When asked what she wishes were different about Battle Creek:

I guess just the community atmosphere...I don't know. We went to the park last night. So, in the park that's right by my house, they have football practice. Yeah. They have football practice there, and there's a little park, so it's just within walking distance. We go there all the time. And so, there are a whole bunch of parents watching their kids do football, or whatever. I don't know. It's just they are blaring horrible, horrible, obscene music, and just not respecting kids. They're throwing bottles at our car, and there are little kids that my kids are playing with that are swearing, and I'm like, ‘Oh my gosh! You're five!’ Just not good behaviors by all. And then, we went to go leave, and the guy in the one car was like, ‘Hey, white girl!’ ...I don't like my kids being around that kind of horrible noise.

When asked what would make Battle Creek a better place, Emily said, “I feel like they do a lot. That's the problem. I feel like Battle Creek, as a whole, has so many resources, and people just don't take the time to utilize them”.

Emily’s Ego Network

Below is a picture of Emily’s ego network. The Key for the Diagram explains the meaning of the sizes, shapes and colors, etc. For example, Emily’s Mom is represented by a large red circle, meaning that her Mom is female, white and is one of the older people in Emily’s network. The red line represents that her Mom lives outside of Battle Creek, the length of the line represents that they are in more frequent communication than the longer lines, and the thickness of the line represents the amount of time they have been in relationship. The arrows on both ends of the line means the relationship is reciprocal.

Figure 25 Emily’s Ego Network

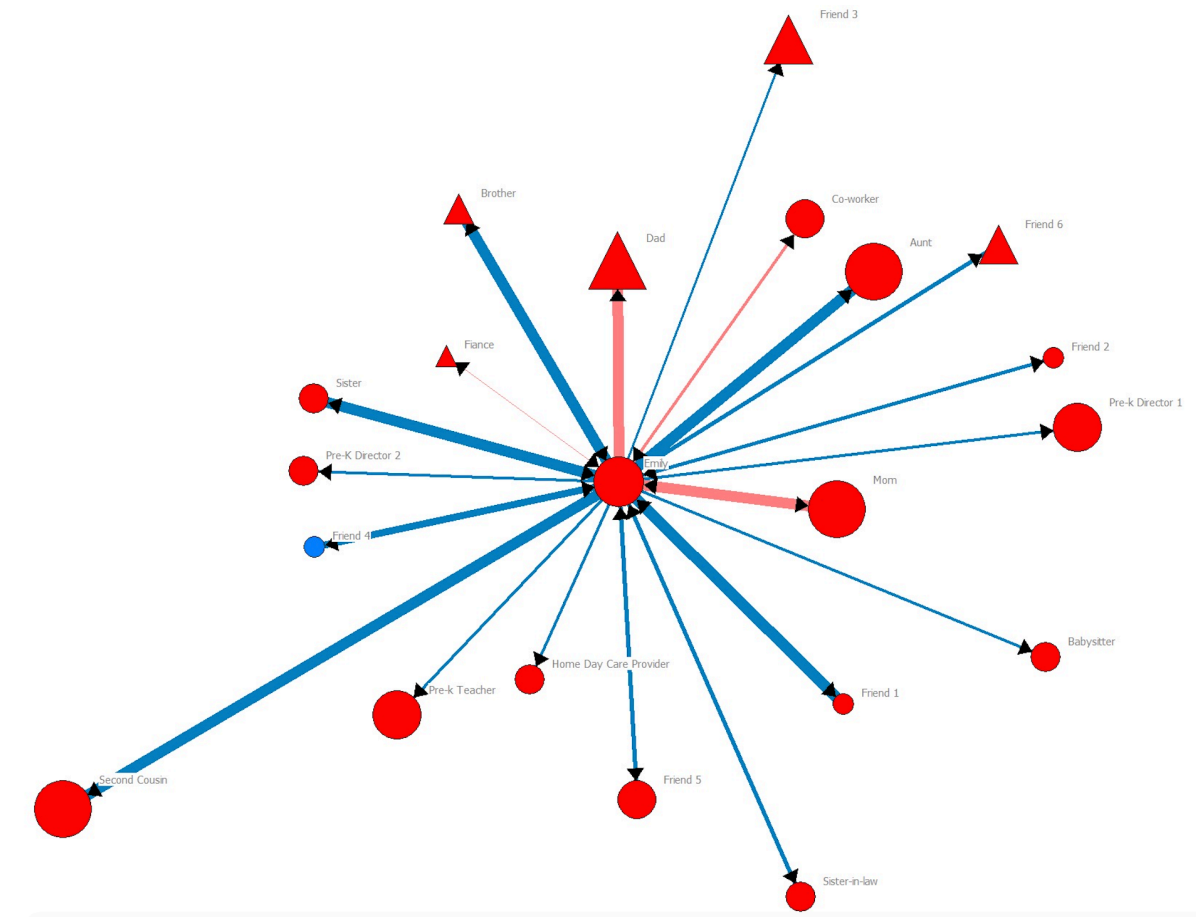


Table 13 - Key for the Ego Network

Shape, size, color, and label of the nodes

Shape for gender	Triangle for male (1) Circle for female (2)
Size for age	Corresponding to age (the bigger, the more years of age: (except for the ego which is not proportional in order to show the arrows))

Color for race/ethnicity	Black for Unknown (0) Brown for Black/African American (1) Blue for two or more races (2) Red for Caucasian (3) Green for “Mexican” (4) Purple for Italian (5) Yellow for German (6) Grey for Peruvian (7)
Label for the node	Specific terms for family member, friend, professional worker, co-worker, etc.

Length, width, color, and arrow(s) of the line between the ego and alter

Length for frequency of contact	Generally, the longer the line, the less frequent of the contact (except for “5, as needed”): 1 for yearly; 2 for quarterly; 3 for monthly; 4 for daily; and 5 for as needed.
Width for period of time	The longer the period of time, the thicker the line, 0=less than a year, 1= 1 to 4 year; 2 = 5 to 9 years, 3 = 10-14 years, 4 = 15-19 years, 5 = 20-24 years, 6=25-29 years, 7=30-34 years, and 8=35-40 years.
Color for the geographic location of the alter (a proxy for the geographic distance between the ego and alter)	Blue for 1 (Battle Creek), pink for 2 (other)
Arrow(s) of the line	Lines with double arrows denote a reciprocal relationship; lines with a single arrow denote a one-way relationship.

Narrative to Support Ego Network:

Emily has a network of 20 people. As noted in the literature review, homophily is the concept that networks are homogenous with regard to many sociodemographic, behavioral, and intrapersonal characteristics and this can be extremely limiting to people’s social worlds and also have implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience (McPherson, 2001; Lin 2000). There is also a tendency for those in disadvantaged socioeconomic positions to cluster together regarding people of similar characteristics, race, gender, religion (Lin, 2000; McPherson, 2002). This is true for Emily’s network with 95% of her alters being white, 75% of her alters being female, and 80% of her alters living in Battle Creek. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied with 4 people in the Business and Financial Operations Occupations; 3 people in Personal Care and Service Occupations; 3 people in Transportation and Material Moving Occupations; and 4 people in Educational Instruction and Library Occupations²⁶ (all of whom work at Preschool Center 1). Emily also had very regular contact with 65% of her network in daily or weekly communication.

²⁶ Employment categories based on the United States Department of Labor 2018 Standard Occupational Classification System.

The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is weighted toward more brief relationships with 50% being less than 4 years. Forty-five percent of her relationships have been in existence over 25 years; however those are all family members. When asked if Emily felt like she was getting the support she needed from her Informal Network, she said “Yes, there isn’t anything missing”. Cody and Derek’s dad is not included in Emily’s ego network of support because they do not have contact with him.

Below is some additional description Emily provided about certain people in her network:

Friend #1	Emily does play dates with Friend #1 and her son who is around the same age as her boys. They are friends from high school. That son also attends Awana, a bible study program at their church, with Emily’s boys. Emily used to babysit Friend #1’s oldest son.
Friend #2	Is the mother of Cody and Derek’s half-brother. They exchange a fairly significant amount of information about resources for their children.
Friend #3	Is also a Pastor at her Church and runs Awana that her boys attend. She says he is “always been super nice to the boys”
Friend #4	Is the one that got her connected with her church.
Friend #5 Friend #6	Are two fairly new friends that Emily has met through church (husband and wife)
Home Day Care Provider	Where Cody and Derek used to go prior to Preschool Center 1. They used to be in daily contact, now they keep in touch monthly to do playdate. She has a son that is just now three. They used to live two doors down from the Home Day Care Provider. Her home has a little sign in the window and that’s how they got connected.
Co-workers	Co-worker’s son went to high school with Emily, they no longer work together but still stay in regular contact
Sister-in-law	Share’s resources occasionally
Aunt	Emily describes her Aunt as a “second parent” who is there for her when her parents are in Florida during the winter.
Mom and Dad	Both retired bankers
Fiancé	During our last interview Emily shared that she has just got engaged and has a Fiancé

Interactions with the Formal Network

Below is a different iteration of Emily’s ego network that continues to include only the individuals that referred her to an organization or opportunity as well as the organizations or opportunities that Emily identified during her interview as important to her as she is raising her children. The value of this visual is that it shows which people and organizations served at entry points (Bridges/Cultural Brokers/Front Porches ((Valente, 2012; Callejas et al., 2010; Ishimaru et al., 2016, Lareau, 2005) for Emily. Some organizations opened up many opportunities while others provided a connection to just one or two other opportunities.

Figure 26 Emily's Expanded Network

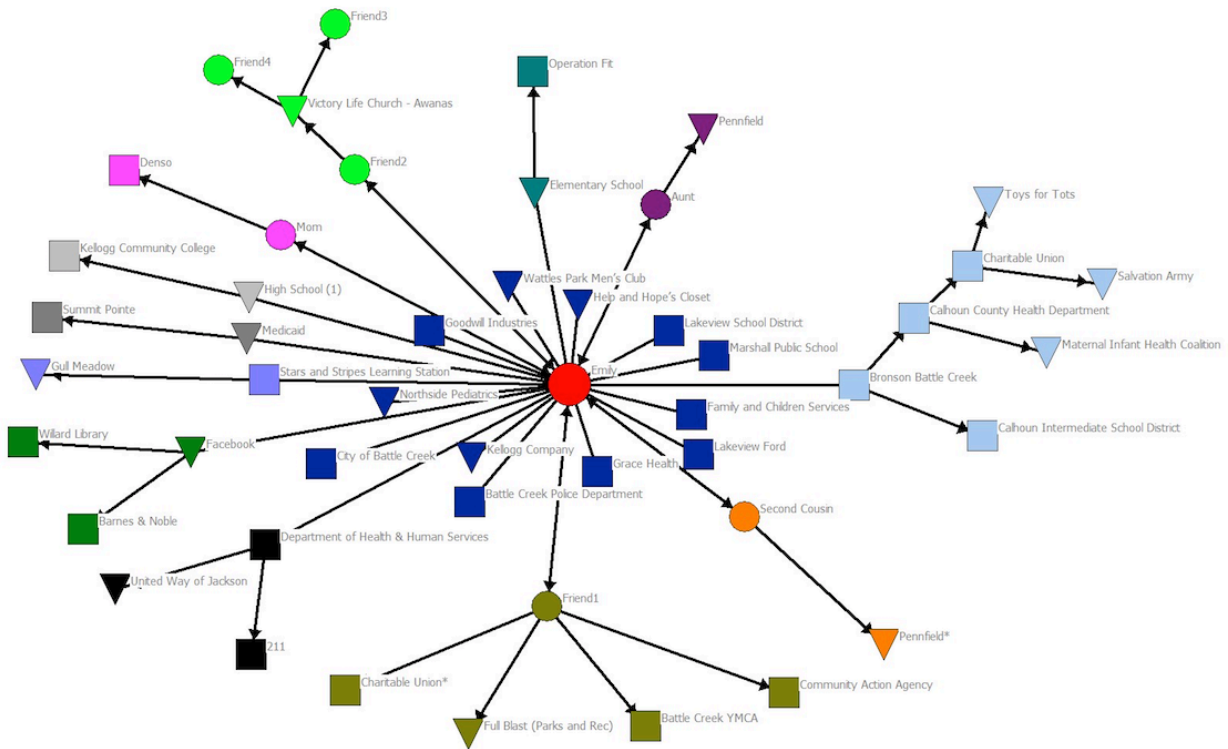


Table 14 Key for the Expanded Network

Shape and color of nodes, length/width and arrow of the line

Shape	Square for organization in the Formal Early Childhood System Network Circle for individual in Informal Family Ego Network Down Triangle for organization in the Informal Family Ego Network
Color	Red for Ego Dark Blue for not contained in a referral set
Length, width of line	No significance
Arrow(s) of the line	Lines with double arrows denote a reciprocal relationship; lines with a single arrow denote a one-way relationship.

Narrative to Support Ego Network

Emily's network shows that her entry points were a mix of individuals and organizations. For example, Friend 1 provided multiple access to 4 organizations, 3 that were included in the Formal Network and one new organization that was outside of the network. Community Action, a member of the Network Core, is one of the organizations that Emily was referred to by Friend 1 meaning that this individual helped Emily get connected with an organization who, according to the Formal Network, is connected to a high degree or other organizations. Bronson Battle

Creek, while not in the Network Core, provided an opening to access to 6 other organizations, 3 in the Formal Network and 3 outside of the formal network.

Overall, Emily feels like she is getting the support she needs from this formal network of provider saying, “I feel like in any situation, you have to work with what you are given. Of course, more money would be helpful, but with not being financially stable, there comes a lot of resources to where your kids are able to go to preschool. So I think that in the long run, if you use your resources, you can attain what you need to for your kids to be successful.” An area where Emily is not getting the support she needs is regarding child support:

I guess as far as child support goes, I can get a little salty with that. I feel like it's a broken system as far as making people accountable for paying child support. And as far as DHS goes, they won't even look at it unless you have been without pay for three months. So, I'm like, "You couldn't just take it into account. I understand I can get a job tomorrow, or whatever, but put it into a formula, or something that at least gives me partial support. I feel like it's just a broken system, and there's no accountability. It's dumb...I feel like just for the courts in general, they don't hold people accountable, and they just drop the ball as far as, "Oh, we'll give you another chance." And I'm not saying I want him to be in jail or something, but if you don't have a job, and you have \$10,000 in back child support, that's a flawed system.

Below is some additional description Emily provided about certain organizations in her network:

211	Called a few times for help with heating. Go to organization would be 211 – “I think 211 is always helpful, always tell people about 211 it is amazing, if they have something they will tell you”. Have known about it for a long time – probably DHS – they always say “Call 211”
Barnes & Noble	Go to story time, Polar Express
Battle Creek YMCA	Signed the boys up for swimming lessons
Bronson Battle Creek	The birth of both of her children.
Calhoun County Health Department	Had used WIC
Calhoun Intermediate School District	“I really liked the coach I had for Early Childhood Connection. We would host a party. Yes. She's super nice. During the first time with my boys, I struggled, and I was like, "Are they doing their milestones?" It was really nice to know that they were where they were supposed to be, and stuff like that.” "The Early Childhood Connection ladies run our car seat checks, because of licenses."
Charitable Union	Charitable Union is always nice to go to – connected to Charitable Union through WIC
Community Action	For bill assistance.
Denso	Used to work there.
Department of Health & Human Services	Has gone there for food stamps. During our first interview Emily said, “DHS obviously is super helpful” But later, Emily explains that “DHS is a hot mess” because her bill is always messed up. But, the director at [Pre-K] Director is super helpful with questions and issues. Back in October, or December, or sometime around there, I reached out, because they help pay your electric bill. I wasn't qualified for some reason, but then, this lady emailed me yesterday, and said that they're having policy changes, so I could reapply if I want to.”
Family & Children Services	"I feel like I went there before when I was younger"
Goodwill Industries	Bought things and donated.
Grace Health	Dentist - teeth cleaning

Kellogg Community College	Went there.
Lakeview Ford	Bought van from there.
Marshall Public Schools	Was a substitute/parapro
Summit Pointe	Used to go there

Case 2 - Jai'lysa and Malikai

Family Overview

Jai'lysa is a 27-year mother with one son Malikai, 4. Jai'lysa and Malakai's dad are together and they were living together, but now they are living in separate places. Jai'lysa was working third shift at a nursing home. From there she worked at a drug rehab center and is now employed in a business administration type of position. Jai'lysa got her degree from Sienna Heights in Community and Human Services. When asked to describe her family, Jai'lysa didn't just describe her immediate family, "Well, it's me and Malikai, his dad, my mom, my sister... I have two brothers as well. My grandpa, my aunt, and my cousin. All of us have kids, so I won't even include them, as they're just a bunch of little kids." Most of her close family lives in Battle Creek. "All of my family members are just like me – they're all bubbly, and just positive. And we don't really get into fights. I have never heard of my family members being into anything negative, or any drama or anything. So, that's my immediate family. Jai'lysa described some differences between her immediate family and her extended family. "As far as my extended family, they're pretty different than my immediate family. My extended family are more negative, like they like drama, and they keep drama going. So, we don't really get together a whole lot, just because of stuff like that. Not because of, "Oh, you're bad people, so don't come by us. It's just like with some people, you have to love them from a distance." Given these circumstances, Jai'lysa notes that her extended family really only gets together on holidays.

Jai'lysa described Malikai as, "the typical toddler". "Energetic, although maybe more energetic than most kids. He likes to pretend he is a dinosaur and sometimes a bat. He's one of those kids who thinks he is in action figure mode when we go out places." Jai'lysa also describes Malikai as her sidekick "We do everything together...He goes grocery shopping, and when I go get my nails done, he's right there. So, we do everything together" Jai'lysa describes what they like to do together. "The thing that we most like to do at home is run around the house and play hide-and-seek. Or I'll pretend he's Black Panther, and I'm the Rhino – That was their pet in the movie. So, he likes it when I run around like the Rhino, and he's on my back. So, really, he does everything with me. His dad works second shift, so he's always tired or at work."

Jai'lysa shared that she struggles with anxiety since becoming a parent but that she has found ways to cope such as remaining calm and counting in her head. She also shared a unique family support system that she has created on Facebook – an online chat. "Every single day, people say, "Good morning. Good afternoon. What's going on? How's work?" All day." She finds this very supportive because quite a few people in her family deal with depression. It's a place where they can all talk and share their feelings. Jai'lysa said if someone is feeling lonely, there are so many people on the chat that someone will stop by.

Getting Connected to Preschool

Jai'lysa began her search for daycare by looking online with the search term "daycare". Malikai has been in daycare since he was 10 months old. Before he started at Preschool Center 1, Jai'lysa was working third shift so she had him during the day, and at night he would go to his Dad's or he would go to Jai'lysa's Moms. Jai'lysa shared that wasn't a very good arrangement and she finally decided "I've got to do something" and that's when she enrolled him in the Center.

...my mom recommended this facility to me. And when I came in, luckily, they had an opening for him, so it wasn't too hard to get him in. But back then, I wasn't really making good money, so I was like, "But how am I going to pay for it? Because daycare here is \$178 a week." And ..., the director back then, referred me to DHS, and I just had some paperwork to fill out, and I gave it to them. And they set me up for daycare through here. And then, I also had a really good caseworker at the time, and she set me up with food stamps. I already had Medicaid, so they set that up for him as well. But it was pretty easy getting him in here. It was the luck of the draw, honestly. I came in, and [the director] was like, "I have never seen anyone get approved that fast for daycare."

Once Malikai got to preschool age, Jai'lysa had to apply again because the preschool portion is different from the daycare portion of the organization. While this was a positive experience for, Jai'lysa, she mentioned that, "I have been dreading to have another kid. I want another kid, but I'm like, "I don't want to go through that process again." Because the first time, I was lucky enough to get all that support, but what if this time, I go down there, and I get another caseworker that's not so helpful?"

Reflections on Experience as a Parent

When asked to reflect on what she found rewarding, challenging and/or surprising as a parent, Jai'lysa shared:

What I like about being a parent is it makes me feel good to know that I am raising a little person. I can't really explain it. It just feels good to know that I'm raising him. He's such a good kid, and everywhere we go, people are like, "Oh, he's so well-behaved." And it just makes me feel good. I'm the one that's teaching him to be this way, and it just makes me feel good that I'm being a good mom, and I'm able to provide for him... Challenging... Patience. I think that's probably my biggest thing that I've struggled with, being a parent. I do suffer from mild anxiety, so sometimes, I get a little overwhelmed, but he doesn't know that I have anxiety. He doesn't know that I get frustrated easily. So, I think I have been doing good at not showing him that I get frustrated, but I do get really frustrated and anxious sometimes. And he's just like, "Mom! Mom! Mom! Mom! Mom!" And I'm like, "Oh, I can't take it!" So, that's just been challenging for me. But it's been four years now, so I rarely have days like that, where I just go in my room, and just say, "Mom, can you come get him?" But that's pretty much the most challenging thing. That's patience I had to learn.

Jai'lysa has been surprised at "how fast they grow." She didn't expect that she would need to buy new clothes for Malikai quite so often – every 3-6 months. The amount of sacrifice was another area that surprised, Jai'lysa. "I knew that I was going to have to sacrifice a lot, like a lot of free time... I knew what to expect just from my mom and other people, but really, just how much money I have to spend. I thought it was just enrolling your kids in daycare, and that was it. Or enroll your kids in school, and that was it. It was so much I had to do just to get into daycare, so much I had to do just to get him to the doctor, or get him a good doctor."

Aspirations for Malikai

Jai-lysa:

When I think about his future, he's such a big kid right now. Everyone thinks he's six, and his doctor says he's going to be super tall, super big. So, he's going to be pretty tall. He loves sports. He loves soccer, and he loves football. I wasn't able to get him into sports this summer, but next summer, I'm hoping to get him into sports. So hopefully, when he grows up, he can get into sports and get scholarships, and just be successful. I don't care what he wants to be when he gets older. I don't care what he wants to do. I'll support it, as long as he's doing something that he enjoys doing. And with sports, I know he loves sports, so I want to get him in now, so he can get those scholarships.

Jai'lysa mentioned that she didn't enroll Malikai in sports last summer because she was busy working on her degree. "I was getting my Bachelor's, and for my job, it was a couple of classes that I had to take that interfered with my work schedule, so the only schedule I could come up with them was working a split schedule. I would go in from 8:00 to noon, and then leave and go to class, and then come back from 4:00 to 8:00. And then, also, for me to get my degree, I had to do an internship, so that took up a lot of my time as well. I had to take four classes, just to finish up this last semester. I can't put him into sports, because his dad is working second shift, so he won't be able to be there. I didn't want to depend on other people to take him, so I'm just like, "Okay, next year, definitely I'll put him in."

In addition to aspirations for Malikai, Jai'lysa also shared some concerns. She is concerned about his speech: "His speech isn't as clear as a lot of the four-year-olds in his class, but he's doing a lot better. Each month, his speech gets better." She did talk to the doctor but the doctor said that he's fine and some kids are just a little behind. Jai'lysa also shared that Malikai is a little emotional sometimes.

He exaggerates his emotions sometimes, like when someone takes something from him, he gets really upset I can't even really explain it. He can get really angry. Not angry to the point where he'll hit someone, but he'll get angry and start crying and get mad. He just gets emotional sometimes. But it's not really a concern of mine, like when I think, "Oh, I'm worried that he'll hit someone today." Just for the future, I'm trying to get him out of being so sensitive and emotional to where he takes everything so personal and harsh.

Living in Battle Creek

Jai'lysa has lived in Battle Creek since 2002. Her father was in the military so she moved around a lot. Prior to Battle Creek Jai'lysa and her parents lived in Jackson, Michigan. Once her parents got divorced she moved to Battle Creek because her grandma and other family members live here. Jai'lysa does like the size of Battle Creek. "It's small. Everyone knows everybody, which can be a pro or a con, but I look at it more of as a pro, because I feel comfortable going to certain places, because I know everybody, or pretty much everybody." She also likes the fact that Malikai will know many people in the area as he grows up which makes her feel comfortable. "What's kept me here so long, is that I'm familiar with it."

Despite the comfort of familiarity, Jai'lysa has considered leaving the community.

Well, honestly, I have been thinking about moving out of Battle Creek, just because of the lack of resources. I was thinking about moving to Kalamazoo, because I have seen that they have the Kalamazoo Promise [a college scholarship program]. I thought that was really nice, and I haven't seen anything like that here. And then, as far as the beginning, when I had the caseworker, she was really helpful. And then, after that, each caseworker I got was just nasty and rude to me. And I'm like, "How can I move forward in this community when the people who are supposed to assist the community are just so rude?" It was just really hard to keep him here, and with everything going on over there....I'm kind of worried about if I do stay here in Battle Creek, in this community, would he be able to excel as easy as other cities that offer more support for their students.

This seems to be on Jai'lysa's mind as she shared that the most important decision she has made recently is getting Malikai ready for kindergarten. Jai'lysa signed him up for a new academy and that was important because she doesn't live in the district. Jai'lysa's mom has been encouraging her in the process.

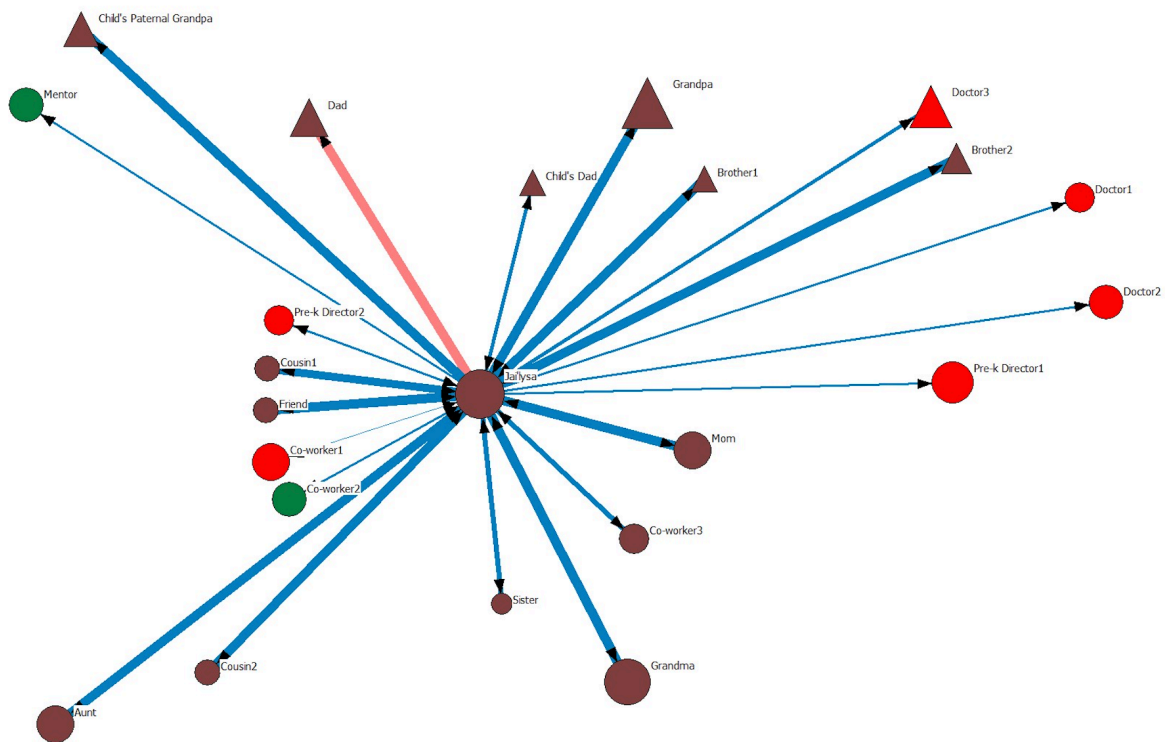
When asked what would make Battle Creek a better place to live, Jai'lysa shared that more opportunities in the community would make it a better place to live. "I can't even name one thing that I would want to see done, but I just think more for the community, and for the generations coming up, that we should give them more opportunities and more scholarships, and give them things that they can work towards. I know they have got to be out there, but they're not really broadcast anywhere for people to find out about them. Any opportunity that I had, or that I found, I had to go out looking for it. So, I just wish it was more broadcast."

When Jai'lysa used the phrase, "I wish it would more broadcast" she clarified by saying she wished more information about opportunities was shared on social media, recommending that maybe there be a community page, or flyers on social media.

Jai'lysa's Ego Network

Below is a picture of Jai'lysa's ego network. A brief reminder of the Key is below sharing the meaning of the sized, shapes and colors, etc. For example, Jai'lysa's mom is a medium sized brown circle indicating that she is a female, African American and is about the median age for Jai'lysa's network. The blue line indicates that Mom lives in Battle Creek, the shortness of the line indicates they are in frequent communication and the thickness means they have been in relationship for the longest compared to others in the network. The arrows on both ends of the line means the relationship is reciprocal.

Figure 27 Jai'lysa's Ego Network



Key:

Length – frequency of contact (the shorter the line the more frequent the contact)

Size – age category (the larger the circle the older the person²⁷)

Color of the nodes– race/ethnicity (Red for white; Blue for 2 or more races)

²⁷ This is true for all nodes except the ego – due to formatting the ego was made bigger to allow for reciprocal arrows to be displayed.

Shape – gender (circle for female, triangle for male)

Weight (thickness) of the line (the period of time the relationship has existed, the thicker the line the longer the relationship has existed)

Line color – geographic location, blue is in Battle Creek and red is not in Battle Creek

Narrative to Support Ego Network:

Jai'lysa has a network of 22 people. Her network has a fair amount of diversity with 64% of her alters being Black/African American, 27% White, 9% Mexican and 68% of her alters being female and a wide range of employment statuses within her network ranging from Management Occupations, to Community and Social Service, to Educational, Protective Services, Construction and Extraction, to Healthcare Practitioners. Geography is an area of greater homophily for Jai'lysa was 95% of her network living in Battle Creek. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied with 4 people in the Business and Financial and 2 people unemployed. Jai'lysa also had very regular contact with 64% of her network in daily or weekly communication. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is weighted toward more toward longer relationships with half of her network relationships in existence for over 20 years.

When asked if Jai'lysa felt like she was getting the support she needed from her Informal Network, she shared that she gets a lot of support from her mom and sister, "But the main support that is lacking is from his [Malikai's] dad, pretty much." Jai'lysa is pretty selective in who she asks for support because she "...hates to ask for something I'm supposed to have control over". Emotionally, she relies on her Cousin 1. She also depends on her grandpa, her Cousin 2 and her brother. Her dad had been there for her son, "But as far as me, he's just like, "Oh, you're grown." Overall, Jai'lysa feels like she gets the support she needs from her network.

I feel like whenever I need anyone to watch my son, or to help me with my son, I have it. My son is on spring break now, and he's home with my sister. She's on spring break, too. If I didn't have my sister, I would have had to pay for him to go to the daycare. Anytime I need any type of help or assistance with him, I always have help. Or if I ever needed money, or any type of help, I can ask pretty much any of these people, and they would help me, or get me to where I need to go." Jai'lysa goes on to share that her sister and her son are "have the time of their life at home right now" while she is working.

Jai'lysa shared some reflections on what her ideal situation for support would be:

Well, I am going to get kind of personal. His dad and I are together, but we are working through some situations, because he just turned 29, and I feel like he's not up to where he should be. I shouldn't have to reach out to DHS. I don't feel like I should have to do that, but I feel like a single mom, because I have to. I can't depend on him as much as I want to. I wish he and I could be together, so that he could help me pay bills, help me pay for daycare, we'd be all set, I wouldn't need DHS, I wouldn't need to ask for other help from anyone... I wish we could be married. That would just be perfect for me. But I don't think

it's going to be there. That's why we're not living together. We're kind of separated until we can work that out, because I don't think that's going to work with us. But even if not, like even if we're not together, the perfect scenario would be for me to be able to not need DHS at all. I can provide for him, and I'm kind of at the verge where I don't really need DHS so much anymore anyway, but it is helpful. But he gets insurance from DHS. He gets the Medicaid. So even if I were able to put him on my insurance, that would be a lot of money. I wouldn't be able to afford it. So, basically, I wish I could just get a big raise, or get a big promotion, and be able to just not have to worry about money situations or anything. Because other than that, I don't really worry about money situations, but I wish I didn't have to worry about DHS and those types of things. So, that would just be perfect for me, if I could just be more successful.

Below is some additional description Jai'lysa provided about certain people in her network:

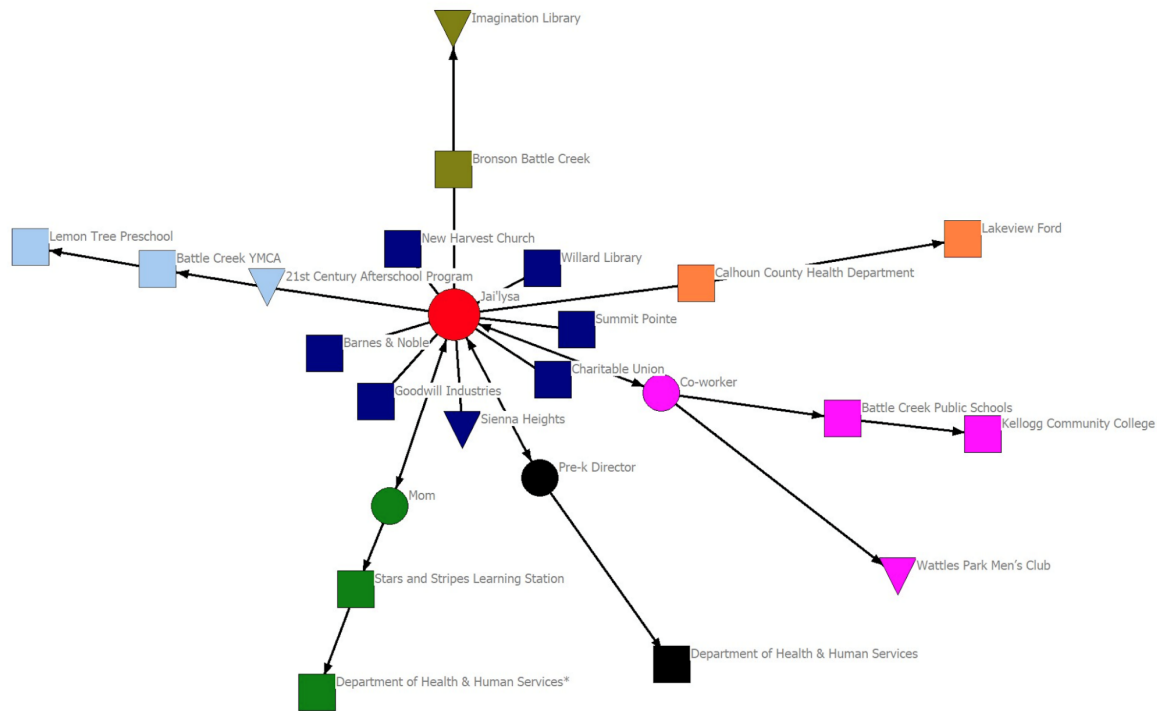
Dad	"Don't really go to him for support - not very supportive".
Mom	Goes to Mom for emotional support - phone calls, get together to talk, rarely go to her or ask her for much. Jai'lysa "There would be times when I would go in my room, and just call my mom, like, "Mom, please come up!" And she'd come over."
Sister	Comes to Jai'lysa if she needs a ride to the mall, or for money if her mom says she can't get that for her right now. She watches son sometimes. "My little sister – she's 14 – she would come over and help him, play with him. We're really close as a family, so it's not like I'm calling her, and she doesn't know what to do with him. They're there pretty much every day."
Grandma	Has Jai'lysa run errands for her sometimes.
Brother	Jai'lysa watches his 5-year-old son often, that's about it, goes to him for emotional support to vent
Grandpa	He'll have Jai'lysa run errands with him.
Aunt	Give her a ride every now and then. Goes and helps get groceries, etc. Is part of the Facebook messenger - "Family Chat"
Cousin 1	Her son is Jai'lysa's God baby, and she has been helping and giving a lot of emotional support – her cousin's son is 2 months old. Sometimes Jai'lysa goes to her for emotional support or to vent
Cousin 2	Mutual - but they don't really need anything from each other. Emotional support, moral support
Friend	Best Friend. "When we talk we don't provide support...it's just goofiness or happiness. I can't really explain it. Sometimes she will vent about her husband." Her Friend has always been there for her. She's never asked her for anything, but Jai'lysa has helped with her Friend's son.

Doctor 1	Still goes to keep up on medications, don't feel like she needs a therapist. Didn't really like the therapy.
Co-worker 1	Referred her to Wattles - comes to her for emotional support or to "vent"
Co-worker 2	"When you have positive co-workers it makes the day and week go by easily"
Co-worker 3	Her daughter and Jai'lysa's younger sister are best friends
Child's Dad	"He moves around to different jobs"
Pre-k Director 2	Messages her on Facebook with questions
Mentor	Keeps emailing, located inside of Kellogg Community College, main campus is in Adrian - emails about every month. When Jai'lysa was in school used to go to her for support. She does still send emails and updates about what's going on if Jai'lysa wants to go back to school.
Child's Paternal Grandpa	Malikai's dad doesn't have a hold lot of communication with his Dad, so they don't either. "I have known him all my life, because he has been one of those police officers at the schools. I have known him before I knew his son."

Interactions with Formal Network

Below is a different iteration of Jai'lysa's ego network that continues to include only the individuals that referred her to an organization or opportunity as well as the organizations or opportunities that Jai'lysa identified during her interview as important to her as she is raising her children. The value of this visual is that it shows which people and organizations served at entry points (Bridges/Cultural Brokers/Front Porches (Valente, 2012; Callejas et al., 2010; Ishimaru et al., 2016, Lareau, 2005) for Emily. Some organizations/people opened up many opportunities while others provided a connection to just one or two other opportunities.

Figure 28 Jai'lysa's Expanded Network



Narrative to Support Ego Network

Jai'lysa's network shows that her entry points were a mix of people and organizations. For example, Jai'lysa's co-worker (represented in pink) connected her to one organization outside of the formal network, Wattles Park Men's Club, a sports program for children, and one organization within the Formal Network, Battle Creek Public Schools, who went on to connect her to another organization in the Formal Network, Kellogg Community College. Battle Creek Public Schools is part of the Network Core, so in this example, it is an individual in Jai'lysa's formal network that is getting her connected not just to the Formal Network, but directly to the core of that network. Of the six entry points for Jai'lysa, 3 were individuals in her Informal Network, one was an organization not listed in the Formal Network, and two were in the Formal Network. For Jai'lysa, this shows that her Informal ties have played an important role in helping her navigate and get connected to the Formal opportunities of support.

When asked if her Informal Network helped her get connected to the Formal Network, Jai'lysa shared, "My network told me about these, which showed up in the other places, so I would say that." Jai'lysa does not feel like she's getting the support that she needs from the formal network. "But I think also, part of it is it's not just them coming to me; it's also me going to them. But if I don't know about it, or if I don't see anything about it, then how would I know to go to them? But I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm getting the support from the community that I need." When asked what additional supports she would need, she didn't have any specific examples, "I really don't know what I would like. I don't even know what I would want. I just don't feel like I'm getting what I need from my community. I really don't know. I can't really say what I would like to see." However, Jai'lysa does explain difficulty finding extracurricular

activities for Malikai other than sports. She primarily relies on online information and searches. For example, Jai’lysa mentions calling the YMCA but them not answering. “I guess I could go down there, but I’m more of a "I need to look online and call ahead" person.” She looked online and wanted to put him in art or music and couldn’t find anything.

Below is some additional description Jai’lysa provided about certain organizations in her network:

Barnes & Noble	Like to go get coffee and sit in there. Has have gone there for books for her son.
Battle Creek Public School	She and sister went to BCPS, trying to get son enrolled in Freemont STEM.
Battle Creek YMCA	“I go to the YMCA a couple times a week with my son. The only thing they ever really offered me was childcare information, and I guess, also things to get myself healthy and my son healthy.” Found out about the Y after participating in 21 st Century as a kid
Bronson Battle Creek	Had son at Bronson
Calhoun Country Health Department	Participated in WIC until Malikai was about 2
Charitable Union	Volunteered there as part of degree at Sienna Heights
Department of Health and Human Services	"And then, as far as the beginning, when I had the caseworker, she was really helpful. And then, after that, each caseworker I got was just nasty and rude to me. Yeah, and I think the reason why I get treated so bad, which isn't a good reason, is because I work at the Federal Center, and they might think, "Oh, why does she need help?" I still need help. Just because I work at a good government place doesn't mean I'm just this rich person. I still need help... I'm probably last on their list....I had a caseworker, who was a slacker. I was constantly turning in the same paperwork, and he was like, "Oh, I didn't get this. I didn't get that. This is getting cut off. You don't have this, unless you turn this in tomorrow." It was just way too stressful. On top of my benefits, something was always happening to my benefits. They weren't really helping me or referring me to any place or anything....For them to pay for my son's daycare when he needed the daycare. But now that he's in preschool, I pay for the hours that he's in the daycare out of pocket. But the stress levels of going through DHS is just really awful. It's really stressful. Especially since I was working over at the Federal Center, they were questioning me. They were saying, "Why do you need assistance?" I don't even get assistance from them anymore. I was going through a lot of unpleasant stuff with them. It's just not worth it to me to keep going through it. They weren't really helping me anyway. I know all about them, unfortunately. I don't even get assistance from them anymore. I was going through a lot of unpleasant stuff with them. It's just not worth it to me to keep going through it. They weren't really helping me anyway.
Goodwill Industries	Applied for a job there after going there to donate some old clothes.
Kellogg Community College	Went there – was introduced to KCC by high school, they took them on a tour.
Lakeview Ford	Got a free car seat for her son “I want to say I found out about them through WIC. With WIC, they have people that come to your house and talk to you, and they told me about that. So that’s where I got my son’s big boy car seat from. It’s not really big boy, but from the Stage 2.”
New Harvest Church	I have gone there before, and the way I found out about them is I have a couple of friends who go there, and they said, “Oh, this is a new church with a lot of young people who would like it.”
Stars and Stripes	They are the ones who introduced me to the Department of Health & Human Services, because I came here first to get my son enrolled in a daycare. I didn't know anything about it. I didn't know the costs. I didn't know anything; I just showed up here one day. And then, they referred me to downtown, to get benefits and

	everything. I found out daycare was \$30 a week. But I didn't know what to expect. They got me set up on who I need to talk to and what I need to do to get him enrolled here with them paying.
Summit Pointe	After her son was born, Jai'lysa had post-partum depression and anxiety and her friend recommended that she seek some support through Summit Pointe. "Summit Pointe. I mean, I have gone down there, and they do understand me whenever I tell them, "I feel weird. I have been feeling this way, and I don't know why." And they're like, "Okay," and they'll explain to me why. That's why I got into the field I'm in, so I can learn about myself more and help others."
Willard Library	Use this a lot, check out books, take son to the children's area. Signed up for Imagination Library
Wattles Park Men's Club	Signed up online

Case 3 – Hannah and Alison

Family Overview

Hannah is a 27-year-old single-mom with one daughter, Ali, 4. Her income is below 250% of poverty and both she and her daughter identify as white. During the first interview Hannah was employed by a pediatrics office. Her hours were typically 10:00 – 5:30 but sometimes she had to stay until 7:00 on nights when they were busy. With Ali getting out of preschool at 3:30 Hannah’s grandparents would have to pick her up. Ali actually used to work for the Preschool Center Ali attends now. By our second interview, she had moved onto a new job at a pain care center. Hannah is now working at an asthma and allergy center. Hannah mentioned that she has done a lot of “job hopping...Trying to figure out where I want to be.”

When asked to describe her family Hannah said, “It’s a mess. I really just have my grandma and my grandpa, and it’s me and Ali. Those are my main people” She described her mom as a main person too, but she doesn’t rely on her. She has a step sister that lives in Arizona and a younger brother that she doesn’t communicate with. “He has high-functioning autism, so he doesn’t do well with socializing, and he stays to himself.” Hannah describes one friend with whom she is close, “I have a friend that I will always be friends with. We went to school together. She has two kids, so we have our own life... We don’t talk for a while, and then we reconnect, then we never stop talking. We just go right back to where we were. And her kids are Ali’s age, so that’s nice. She’s awesome. She is my inspiration, because her mom passed away when she was really young. And whatever she’s going through, you would never know. She’s just always smiling, happy, and positive. Her children’s dad isn’t involved with them, so we can relate on that. So, it’s nice.”

Ali is four years old and attends Preschool Center 1. She has been attending since she was 4 months old. Hannah described Ali as a “girly girl” which to her means, “ She likes everything glitter, princess, make-up... We argue about make-up right now, because she wants to do her own make-up, and she’s four, obviously. So, she tried to do it without a mirror. So, that’s fun.” Hannah explains that she has been a single parent since Ali was born and describes it as “rough”. When asked if Ali’s father has been involved, Hannah responded, “ With the court, yes. With her, no. He doesn’t live in the area. He lives in Georgia. He just up and left without telling anybody. This year.” This is something Hannah says she is “dealing with”. She’s [Ali] getting to the age where she and her friends talk about their dad, and she’s like, "My dad doesn't live here." And then she'll come home and ask about him, and I'm just like, "What do I say? I don't really know how to approach that quite yet" Hannah shared an example:

She just is wondering where her father is. Last night, I thought we had gotten past it, but then, last night, she was like, "Is my dad coming today, or tomorrow?" ...I don't say anything. If I can find something to say really quick to get her mind off it, I do. Or I will just say, "I'm not sure." Because I don't know how to answer. I don't want to give her any wrong answers or talk down on Ali's dad right now, because I want Ali to form her own opinion. Because my own real dad wasn't around, and my parents thought horribly of him, so I didn't really get the chance to form my own opinion. I was just thinking, "He's a bad person." I want her to be able to do that on her own, even though I obviously feel

certain ways about him. But I don't ever talk badly about him around her. My mom does. She really does not like him. I don't either. But she'll talk about it in front of Ali, and I can't do that.

Getting Connected to Preschool

Hannah describes her experience getting connected to the preschool as positive, particularly because of a staff member in the baby room. "And still, to this day, I love her." Hannah describes her as positive and taking pride in what she does. "... in childcare, you don't get paid a lot. It's not for everybody, especially in the baby room. People don't have patience for it. And she is here day in and day out, and Ali is still attached to her. That was her person that she went to, and I don't know if it's because she's an older lady. So maybe, it just resembled my grandma. My grandma took care of her for a while, so she went to her, and she was fine. I don't know. But it was an easy transition. It helped me." It was also a good experience for Hannah because she worked there. She knew the people and could peek in or go in there any time to check in. When Hanna first applied, Ali was placed on a waiting list. But within two months she had a spot. Hannah likes the preschool because she feels like it is a safe place. They check ID's, have passcodes.

Reflections on Experience as a Parent

When asked to reflect on what she found rewarding, challenging and/or surprising as a parent, Hannah shared:

I had to grow up really fast. I was young.... So, I was living at home, and I found out [she was pregnant], when I was 21, and I had to grow up. It was time to find my own place and take care of myself, and prepare.... Well, I was living at my stepdad's house, so I knew that that wasn't an environment I wanted to be in anyway, with a small child. He has a lot of animals, so I'm allergic, and she's allergic. So, I just knew that I needed to save. I had nine months, so that was when I was working at a daycare in Portage, when I was pregnant. I picked up as many hours and overtime, and anything I could. I was babysitting outside of work. And I just saved, saved, saved. And I found a place, and I just moved.

Hannah struggled with depression after Ali was born. "...I had really deep post-partum depression, and I had no support. I was on three antidepressants, and obviously, I was at home taking care of her, because I was on maternity leave, and I just was blue. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I thought this was just like the world was going to end. 'Oh my gosh! I'm a single mom! I've failed.' That type of thing. I almost felt like I was ashamed to reach out to anybody. I didn't want anybody to be disappointed. So I just took my medicine and put on a happy face. And then, finally, it got to a point where people noticed, and I finally blew up, and said, "It's bad." They wanted me to do therapy. I tried it, and I felt like I was paying a stranger to talk to. I was like, "This is not for me." It wasn't for me. But really, all they wanted to do was just prescribe more medicine. I'm not a big pill-taker, so me just being on the antidepressants that I was on, it was already a lot." Hannah said going back to work helped her feel more normal and get back into a normal routine so she wasn't just home alone.

Hannah has found the expenses of being a parent challenging. "...especially being a single mom with one income. And I don't get a lot of help from the state. It's not that I expect a lot of help, but I get frustrated, because I feel like the people that need it the most are the ones that don't get it. And then, the ones that don't really need it get all of it. I make too much, so I get cut off. So, I guess I have to not work to be able to get help. So, it's either work, and I don't have food, and I just pay my bills, or I work, and I pay my bills, and I hardly get help." Hannah shared that, she gets very little food assistance, but Ali's preschool is state funded which helps; however, if she were to attend before or after care or go on Friday Hannah would have to pay out of pocket Hannah's was also surprised by the cost of diapers and formula. Ali is lactose intolerant and as a result had to use formula that was expensive. "...she would go through it crazy, because they're not bigger cans. They're small cans, but they're expensive. And she would go through them like crazy. So, that was a major expense in not having a second income."

Hannah's main concern for Ali is about her safety.

...just being in the world, you see all these horrific things on the news, and shootings in elementary schools, and it just scares me to let her out of my sight. You just never know who's going to walk into a building. I don't know. It just freaks me out. There are so many crazy people. And it's not even crazy people; it's just that they're not seeking the help that they probably need. Because mental illness is real, and I don't think people think that. A lot of people say, "It's just in your head." And it's not. It's real. And people don't get help, and so they just take it out on innocent people. It just freaks me out. That's why I'm like, "I don't really know where I'm going to put her in school. I might want homeschool her, and not work. I don't know."

Aspirations for Child

Hannah shared she is hoping that Ali has a different experience than what she has had. "Well, I hope she's not in Battle Creek, Michigan, for one. I hope she's not 21 and pregnant like I was. And if she is, I hope she's at least with a worthy person that will help her, because I don't want her to struggle like I did. I'm definitely going to have talks with her for sure, because I don't want her to struggle like I did. It's only going to get harder as the generations go on."

Living in Battle Creek

During the first interview Hannah shared that she was considering moving to Arizona. She grew up in Battle Creek, but lived in Arizona in 2011 and nannied for her stepsister who had a baby. She loved it there but was homesick. "I didn't have a car. I just sold everything I had, and I went on a limb and left. And I wouldn't take it back, because I learned a lot, and I got to leave for a little while. But I just came back, and then, now that I have my own kid, I think there is so much more to offer out there. It's bigger. Everywhere is going to have unsafe places and crazies, but maybe in bigger cities. I don't know. I feel like Battle Creek is too small of a city to have such tragic things happen."

Moving to Arizona also came up when Hannah was sharing her thoughts about kindergarten for Ali, "I'm not too fond of the area, just with the shootings and the safety, and I don't know if I'm

comfortable with sending her somewhere. She's been here her whole life. So, after this, I don't really know what I'll do.”

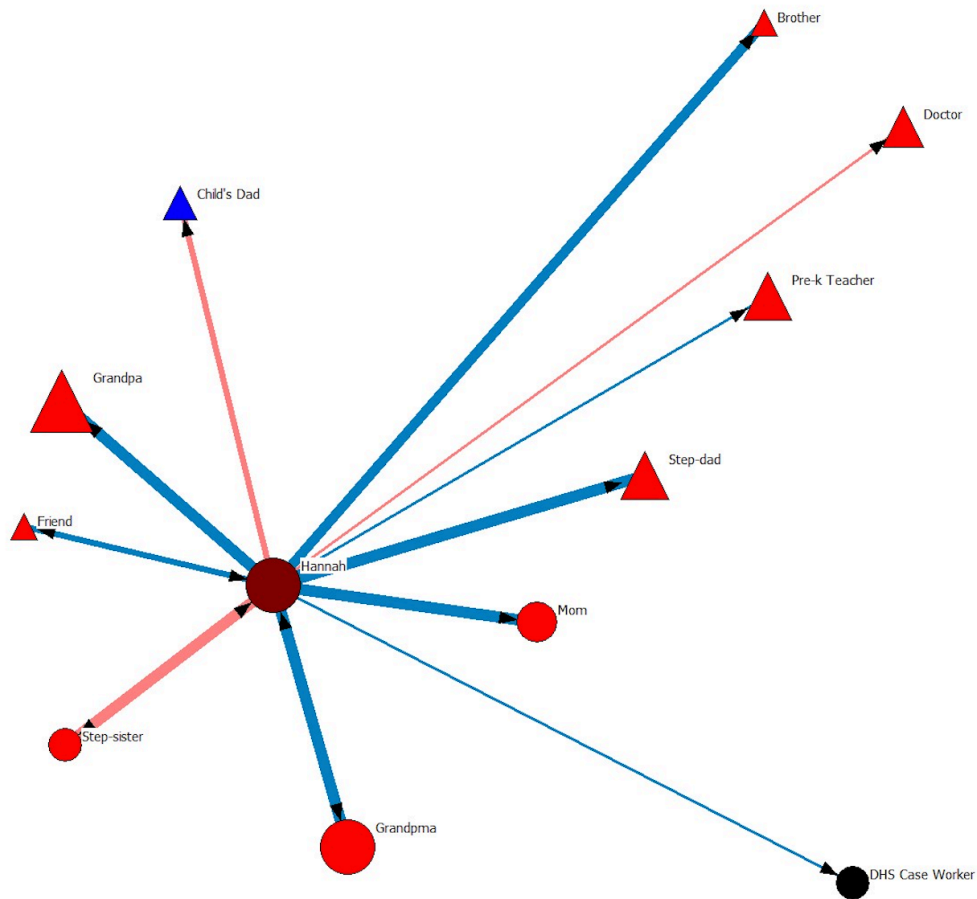
By the third interview Hannah had decided to move to Arizona along with her Mom and Step Dad. Hannah shared that deciding to move was the most important decision she's made recently. "... It will be finding all the services that I have now in Michigan, to finding those services in Arizona. I can't do anything until I'm there, but I guess I have it all researched and saved. The place is paid for, reserved and waiting, so on June 1st, we are leaving. It was tough, but I think it's what's best, given circumstances, and her graduating from preschool, and getting ready for kindergarten. I don't want to send her to school here. And job-wise, there are more opportunities out there in Arizona, so it's just time to shut the book here and move on.” Hannah is moving by her sister whom she nannied for years ago. She is planning on spending a lot of time with them. Her step sister has two children – a six-year-old and a two-year-old. Hannah shared that Ali was part of the decision making “in a way” "... I just asked how she would feel if we up and moved away from where we have been since she was a baby. And she's all for it. She wants to be near her cousins, so she's excited.” They are all going to live in the same apartment complex. She hasn't told her grandparents yet, “I'm waiting for the right time to tell them, because right now, they're still early, so I don't want to tell them too early for them to feel like I'm taking them away from her. I want them to enjoy time.” Hannah is concerned about being able to make it financially but thinks she will be fine.

Hannah shared that she didn't have support in making this important decision. “It was just me. I went back and forth for a while. I mean, I was really hesitant. When I called, it was January that I called and told them, "Hey, I want to put a deposit down." I applied for the apartment. I didn't know if I could get it or not. And then I got approved, and I was like, "Oh my gosh! I didn't know I was going to get approved. And I went from there.”

Hannah's Ego Network

Below is a picture of Hannah's ego network. The Key for the Diagram explains the meaning of the sizes, shapes, and colors, etc. For example, Hannah's Mom is represented by a medium-sized red circle meaning that her Mom is female, white and in the middle age range of people in Hannah's network. The blue lines shows that her Mom lives in Battle Creek, the length of the line represents that they are in more frequent communication, the width of the line is how long they have had a relationships, and the one-way arrow means that is it not a reciprocal relationship.

Figure 29 Hannah's Ego Network



Key:

Length – frequency of contact (the shorter the line the more frequent the contact)

Size – age category (the larger the circle the older the person²⁸)

²⁸ This is true for all nodes except the ego – due to formatting the ego was made bigger to allow for reciprocal arrows to be displayed.

Color of the nodes– race/ethnicity (Red for white; Blue for 2 or more races)

Shape – gender (circle for female, triangle for male)

Weight (thickness) of the line (the period of time the relationship has existed, the thicker the line the longer the relationship has existed)

Line color – geographic location, blue is in Battle Creek and red is not in Battle Creek

Narrative to Support Ego Network:

Hannah has 11 people in her network. Here network does exhibit homophily in the areas of gender and race being 65% percent female and 82% white. The age of her alters spans considerably beginning with the age of 20 and going through the age of 72. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied as well ranging from Business, to Education to Healthcare Practitioners and support to Production Occupations with 2 people being unemployed. Hannah also had very regular contact with 64% of her network in daily or weekly communication; however she only had three people within whom she has a reciprocal relationship. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is fairly split with 5 of her relationships being less than 11 years and 6 of her relationships being more than 20 years.

When asked if she felt like she was getting the support she needed from her network, Hannah said “It depends on what I'm going through. Yes...It's like yes and no, because I know that I could have called my grandparents, but I don't like to bother them if it's not an emergency type of thing.” She continues on that she has trouble asking for help. “I don't like asking for help. I have always just struggled with that, because I have been on my own since I was 18, so I don't really want to ask for help.” “My parents struggled, and they have reached out for help from my grandparents, and I don't want to be like that. I try not to ask for help, unless it's an emergency, like, "Oh my gosh, my pay date is not until next week, and my rent is due in three days. Can somebody help me with whatever I'm short on? I'm saved up for this much, but I'm short \$100. Can somebody help me?" Hannah goes on to share, “Well, I honestly had to seek my own help. Basically, my family was like, ‘You got yourself in this situation, so you can figure it out.’ Our family is weird. I don't know. They're different. My mom and dad are weird people.”

Hannah shared that she doesn't have a babysitter. “ I think trusting people is hard, so that's why I don't have a babysitter. I do babysit for other people, and I take Ali, which they want me to. It makes it nice.” She would like additional support with help to get extra sleep, financially, and some mental and physical support. “It would be nice if I had somebody to let me sleep. I need rest. She woke up this morning at 2:45, and was ready for the day. Yeah. I wasn't ready for the day. But here I am, and I have to be at work until 7:00. And who knows? “I want to say financially. Like I said, I have been doing it so long, that I have established a budget almost. And now, I have a good-paying job, in which I make decent money, so I'm not really penny-pinching. I've got to scrounge up some change to get gas. And so, I don't know. Like I said, if I had somebody else, I feel like it would almost be awkward asking them for help.”

Hannah shares that she does get a lot of help from her grandparents, “She [Ali] goes to my grandparents' every Sunday, so they have a visitation, and they've been like that since she was born. So, she's accustomed to that. Every Sunday, she'll go there for six to eight hours, and have

dinner with them.” Her grandparents also pick Ali up from preschool on the nights that Hannah has to work late.

Below is some additional description Hannah provided about certain people in her network:

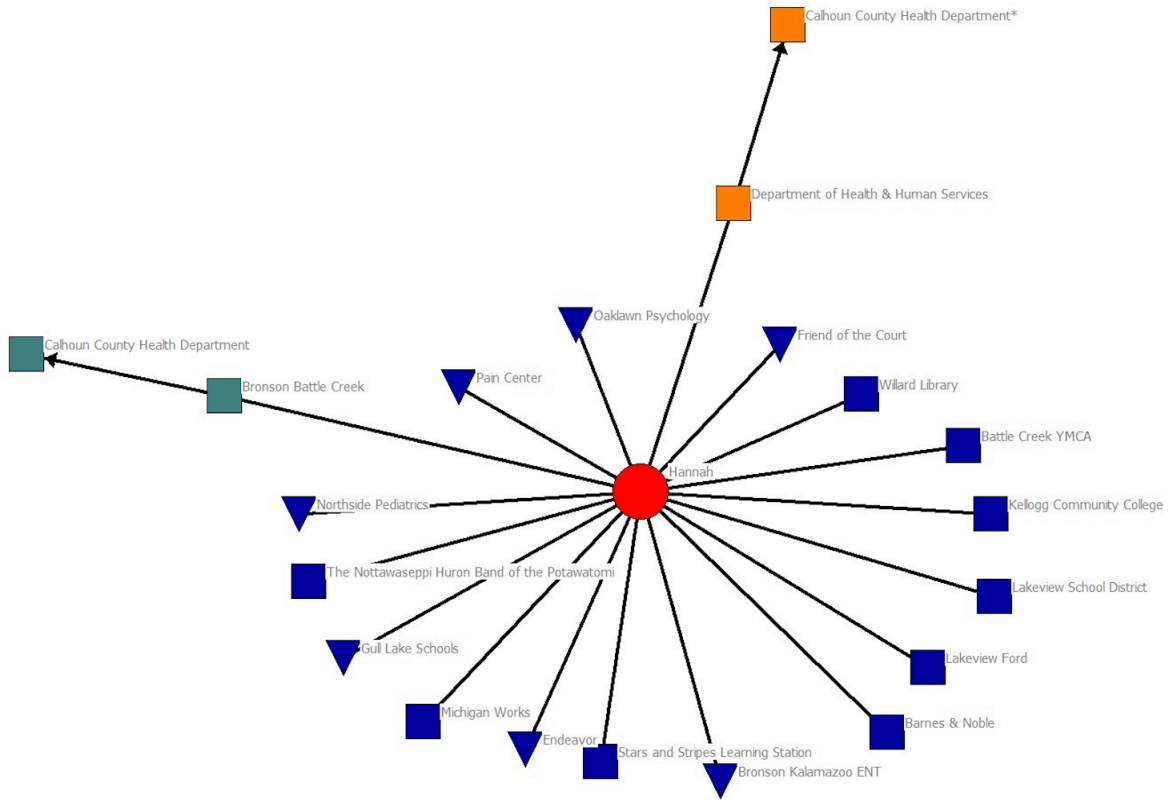
DHS Case worker	Compliance - not really support
Grandma and Grandpa	Provide a lot of support with Ali, as mentioned in the narrative.
Child’s Dad	Don’t know where he lives in Georgia. He has a bench warrant out and has been mentioning that he is coming here. Hasn’t seen Ali in person in a year. He facetimes her once a month. He has another daughter who lives in Portage, Michigan with her mom. He also had a son that lives with him in Georgia. They met in high school at the end of their freshman year.
Step-dad	“He just has medical issues, and so, he doesn't pick her [Ali] up. I don't allow her to be with him alone. He likes to fall asleep. He's older so that's the way it is." Right after our last interview he attempted suicide on Halloween. That is why Hannah lost her job. "I just couldn't hold it together". He was in the hospital and then they transferred him. He has mental illness and depression. Hannah is trying to keep her distance. He likes pills and has always been like that since Hannah has been able to notice. This was his second time trying to commit suicide. Hannah's mom lost her job too because she is taking care of him.
Step-sister	Married with two kids , she is a high school history teacher and getting her master’s degree right now. Hannah talks to her almost every day. They “kind of grew up together.” She was in between her dad and her mom, over every other week. She comes to Haley for advice since she was in the ECE field before she had children.
Brother	Autistic, haven't seen or talked to him in a month, it is very rare.
Friend	Has kids Ali's age and they get together when they can.
Mom	“My mom is kind of hit-or-miss. My mom and I are not as close. It's not that she's not a good mom or a good grandma, but she's just kind of wanting to be young. Her kids are grown. I mean, she's a part of Ali's life, but I don't expect her to raise her.” Hannah’s mom lives with her for now. She doesn’t live with her stepdad anymore and they are also no longer married.

Interactions with the Formal Network

Below is a different iteration of Hannah’s ego network that continues to include only the individuals that referred her to an organization or opportunity as well as the organizations or opportunities that Hannah identified during her interview as important to her as she is raising her

children. The value of this visual is that it shows which people and organizations served at entry points (Bridges/Cultural Brokers/Front Porches (Valente, 2012; Callejas et al., 2010; Ishimaru et al., 2016, Lareau, 2005) for Hannah. Hannah has two organizations that connected her to resources and no one from her Informal Network.

Figure 30 Hannah’s Expanded Network



Narrative to Support Ego Network

Hannah’s network shows that has two entry points and each one connected her to one other organization. Interestingly, both of those entry points connected her to the same organization, the Calhoun County Health Department. Of her two entry points one is in the Network Core, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the other, Bronson Battle Creek seems to be a key connector in general. When asked if she is getting the support she needs from the Formal Network Hannah responds, ““I had to tug and pull a little bit. But for the most part, I get what I need.””

Hannah shares her grandparents perspective on the supports she receives:

My grandma and grandpa don't agree with the system. They're not supportive with that....They try not to imply it when I'm around, because they know I'm on assistance, but they do make comments. When the news is on, they're like, "Oh, you have to work 20 hours to get assistance." They don't agree with people that are on the system. They feel it's always a waste of their tax dollars, but I'm like, 'I'm getting your tax dollars. It's helping me.' They're old, so when they make comments now, I just don't pay attention to

it, because I don't think they realize that they're saying it at this point. And sometimes I think that they forget that I receive help, so I ignore it at this point.

Below is some additional description Hannah provided about certain organizations in her network:

Barnes & Noble	They go there to shop and buy books.
Battle Creek YMCA	Ali had her first birthday party there and has taken swim lessons.
Calhoun County Health Department	WIC, Vaccinations – found out because with insurance it's the only place to do vaccinations (WIC gave her pamphlets but she doesn't remember what they were about.) "I don't have her on WIC anymore. I know I can until she is five, but I don't. It's a hassle, because their business hours conflicted with my work schedule. They're not really offered weekend hours, or later hours during the day, which would be nice. They cover juice and vegetables. They don't cover a whole lot, but it does help with certain things. They cover milk, but not the soy lactose-free milk she would get"
Department of Health and Human Services	Hannah has been with them since she was pregnant. Hannah describes her experience working with DHS as "Horrible" "There was no communication. I did my end of communication, but it wasn't fully on the other end. I would always send in my validations and my proofs, and I would get my benefits turned on, and then, two months later, they would get cut off. And it was like that for the longest time. I finally called up there, and I demanded that I got a new caseworker. And since then, I hadn't had any issues." Her experience has been much better with her second caseworker.
Kellogg Community College	Was taking classes and close to getting an Early Childhood Education certification before she had Ali. "I don't feel like their professors are as evolved as they could be. I mean, when I took classes, I would try to reach out via email when I was stuck... For online classes, if you have questions, you are supposed to email, and I felt like they just weren't very responsive or informative. I don't think they really tried."
Lakeview Ford	Got her car there., "They were very helpful. I felt like they didn't talk to me like I was stupid, like most dealerships do, just because you're a woman and you're by yourself."
Lakeview School District	Step Dad lives in district – worked there as a before and after school person for childcare for a short period of time
Michigan Works	When she was unemployed last year she got something in the mail that said she needed to go down to Michigan Works to start the unemployment process. She wouldn't be able to access unemployment if she didn't go down there. "You just walk in, and there's not really anybody there to guide you, so you just walk in and pick a computer. I mean, if you have questions, there are people at desks, but they're somewhat like DHS and WIC. I don't think they're very helpful. They're all part of the same system."
Stars and Stripes Learning Station	Used to work there.
The Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi	Used to work at the Casino that they own.
Willard Library	Used to go as a kid. Took Ali down there to have something to do.
Friend of the Court	"They're supposed to reach out to the non-custodial parent, and try to figure out where they live, where they work, why they aren't helping with child support, or why they aren't doing visitation, if they want to do visitation, and that type of stuff." "They haven't really done that for me. So I end up calling all the time and asking 'Hey, what do I need to do?' Instead of them doing their job... Well, I have an officer, I guess, but you have to have an appointment to talk to them. Other than that, when you call, you just get who

	<p>you get to talk to. And so, that makes it a little more difficult, because not everybody is familiar with that. If you get the same person every time, it would be easier to talk to them about it..." Ali's father has a warrant out for his arrest because of Hannah reaching out to Friend of the Court. He is behind by \$6,000 on his child support. "I don't know if it's because there are just so many cases that are behind, which I'm sure in Calhoun Country there are. I don't think it's an excuse, personally. I don't want to feel like I'm just another person, and she's just another kid." Hannah thinks this situation would be improved if she was able to get the same person every time she called so they knew her situation. She is very concerned about the next steps in the process and feels like it is unclear. Hannah calls every week regarding payments or if they have heard any information. She found out about Friend of the Court originally because she was served papers from Ali's dad trying to get custody.</p>
Bronson Battle Creek	Ali had to go there when she had RSV.
Northside Pediatrics	Used to work there.
Pain Center	Currently employed there.
Medicaid	<p>"She's [Ali] on Medicaid. And I was under my stepdad's insurance, but I just turned 26, so now I'm on Medicaid. And my work offers really crappy insurance that I'm not going to get So, I have to figure that out, because I don't want to be on Medicaid. They don't cover a lot for adults. They are great with kid stuff, but not for adults. They only cover what they want to with adults, I've learned. With kids, they cover a lot more."</p>

Case 4 – Natalie, Ariel and Lindy

Family Overview

Natalie is a 33-year-old single-mom with two daughters Ariel, 4 and Lindy, 2. Natalie's income is below 100% poverty, she identifies as white and her daughters as white/black. Natalie is a stay-at-home mom. When asked to describe herself Natalie says, "I am a single mom. I don't work. There's not much. I don't know what else to say about myself." In specifically describing her family of three Natalie said, "We are very loving. Of course, any mother would probably do anything for the kids, but they're my little princesses. They're very beautiful, and sometimes, it scares me too, because I just know how that is." The things the three of them like to do together include,

Well, she [Ariel] likes watching TV, and recently, there was a kid YouTube thing, and there are activities on there that she watches. It has something kind of like science experiments that kids do, and then, she likes to watch the princess movies or shows, or do make-up. Little kids do make-up on YouTube, and they dress up like a princess. I have bought them both make-up, and they make a mess, but I let them do it, so they can do each other's make-up. They have lots of toys. I try to keep Ariel into practicing her writing, so that's mainly what we do when we go home. Sometimes, we just go to visit our family, too, because she doesn't like to stay at home. She likes to be on the go... I take her to different parks. There was one on Riverside I was taking her to a lot, and then I read in the paper that some guy tried to grab a woman, so I stopped going there. But she has a little scooter she likes to ride. Lindy has a little bike thing that she scoots along on. I took her to a waterpark that she loved – an indoor waterpark.

Natalie also shared that Ariel likes to play outside, and that she tried to be a "mini mommy" to her little sister. She goes on to share that, "she knows how to spell her name. I know it is kind of early, but I try to teach her math, just so she knows what the gist of it is. She likes to do stuff like that. She is a hyper girl, so she is always on the go. She likes to visit her family. She is very loving. She likes to create sculptures. One time, she had some paper towel that I gave her to wipe her hands, and she made a little thing, and it looked like a bow. She was like, "Here, mom. I made this." It looked exactly like a bow.

When asked what makes her family unique Natalie described her mother and father. "Well, my mom and dad were always into animals growing up. My dad likes exotic animals, like reptiles. He has snakes and spiders, and weird stuff. Yeah. When I was growing up, we had monkeys, and they're called Capuchin monkeys. I think it's the drummer monkey that they call a Capuchin monkey."

Ariel started school this year and it is her first time being away from home. Right now Linette is home with Natalie and they have a home visitor that comes once a week and works with Lindy. Natalie tried to sign Lindy up for preschool but she wasn't eligible so they offered the home visiting instead.

Natalie also likes to take her children to playgroups but faces the barrier of gas money. “I would say just taking them to play groups, like the last one I couldn't take Lindy to, because I had to save my gas to take Ariel to school. It's stuff like that. I mean, there is some stuff during different times of the year that you could go to if you had money.”

Getting Connected to Preschool

When asked to retell the story of how Natalie got Ariel connected to preschool she shared, “I just searched schools, and there was a list of schools that I could put in order which one I would rather let her go to – number one, and then the next one...” Ariel got into Natalie’s first choice which was Preschool 2. (Natalie mostly gets information by searching Google on her phone. Natalie does not use Facebook.) This was her first choice because her mom lives right in the neighborhood. “I picked this place because I was planning on Lindy getting in, and they both can go at the same time. I would like to start Lindy early, because she is kind of shy, so that's why I chose this place. It was easy. I just filled out the application, they called me, and I had an orientation, and I came and filled out that information.” During our first interview Lindy was denied because according to Natalie they reserve slots mostly for working parents. “I mean, I can understand that there are a lot of children her age that were trying to get in, but the ones that come first are of the working parents. Right before our final interview Natalie’s younger daughter turned three which made her eligible to start preschool as well. She was nervous at the start. Natalie describes her as shy. “In the morning, she's always nervous, but when I pick her up, she plays with teachers. They said that it just takes her a little bit of time.”

Ariel goes half days. Of her experience getting acclimated to school, Natalie explains, “...She bugged me all the time to go to school, but I was so nervous, and I just didn't sign her up. In that whole year, she asked me, so I knew I was going to sign her up this year. But of course, the first and second time we bring her, she wanted to come back home. I'm like, "Well, you've been asking."

Natalie shared that she had a big decision coming up to make for Ariel regarding Kindergarten. She is thinking about sending her to the school where her nieces go. When asked how she might go about making that decision, Natalie shared that she plans to visit. This is another area Natalie shared some nervousness about, “You never know someone can act really nice and treat your child differently”. Natalie decided to send her here to Preschool 2 because they allow parents to come into the classroom and you can stay the whole time if you want.

Reflections on Experience as a Parent

When asked what Natalie has found to be rewarding, challenging and/or surprising as a parent she says that Ariel has helped her be more patient. And it’s rewarding because, “she loves me very much”. Natalie mentions getting clothes for her girls as a need. “Well, she has grown a lot in a year, so every other week, it seems her pants are not really fitting her. I have to get her some clothes, because mostly, she has a ton of toys and stuff like that.” Other challenges Natalie mentions include making sure she is giving her children what they need. “I want her to have everything, but I only get a certain amount of income a month. That's challenging.”

Natalie is also worried or nervous about the safety of her children. “The only thing I have felt is how nervous I was to bring her into places of people I don’t know – just how this world is. I can’t trust anyone, really. And yeah, I know she would tell me if someone tried to hurt her or anything, but that is the main thing I am nervous about.” Natalie is also concerned about someday when Ariel gets a boyfriend. “Well, she’s not of age yet, but I would be concerned about her having a boyfriend. That’s where I would get worried.”

When Natalie was asked what it would look like for her to feel supported as a parent she said, “Well, I do get food stamps and medical for the girls. My income is social security and disability, so before I had the girls, I got Medicaid and food stamps for myself. After they were born, they make it where they force you to put the father on child support, or they don’t help you. They’ll help the kids, but they won’t help you, so now I’m paying for medical, and I really don’t get that much income. Now I’m paying for medical, and I don’t get food stamps. It’s just for the girls. I don’t think they should force you to put the father on child support. He helps out with them, and when they’re with him, he provides for them, and they love their dad very much. He gets minimum wage, so that would put a strain on him and them – him being stressed, and their relationship, and stuff like that.”

Aspirations for Child

Regarding her aspirations for Ariel, Natalie shares, “I would hope that she’s a respectful lady that gets an education, and goes for what she wants to do, that she loves to do, not something that she has to do.”

Living in Battle Creek

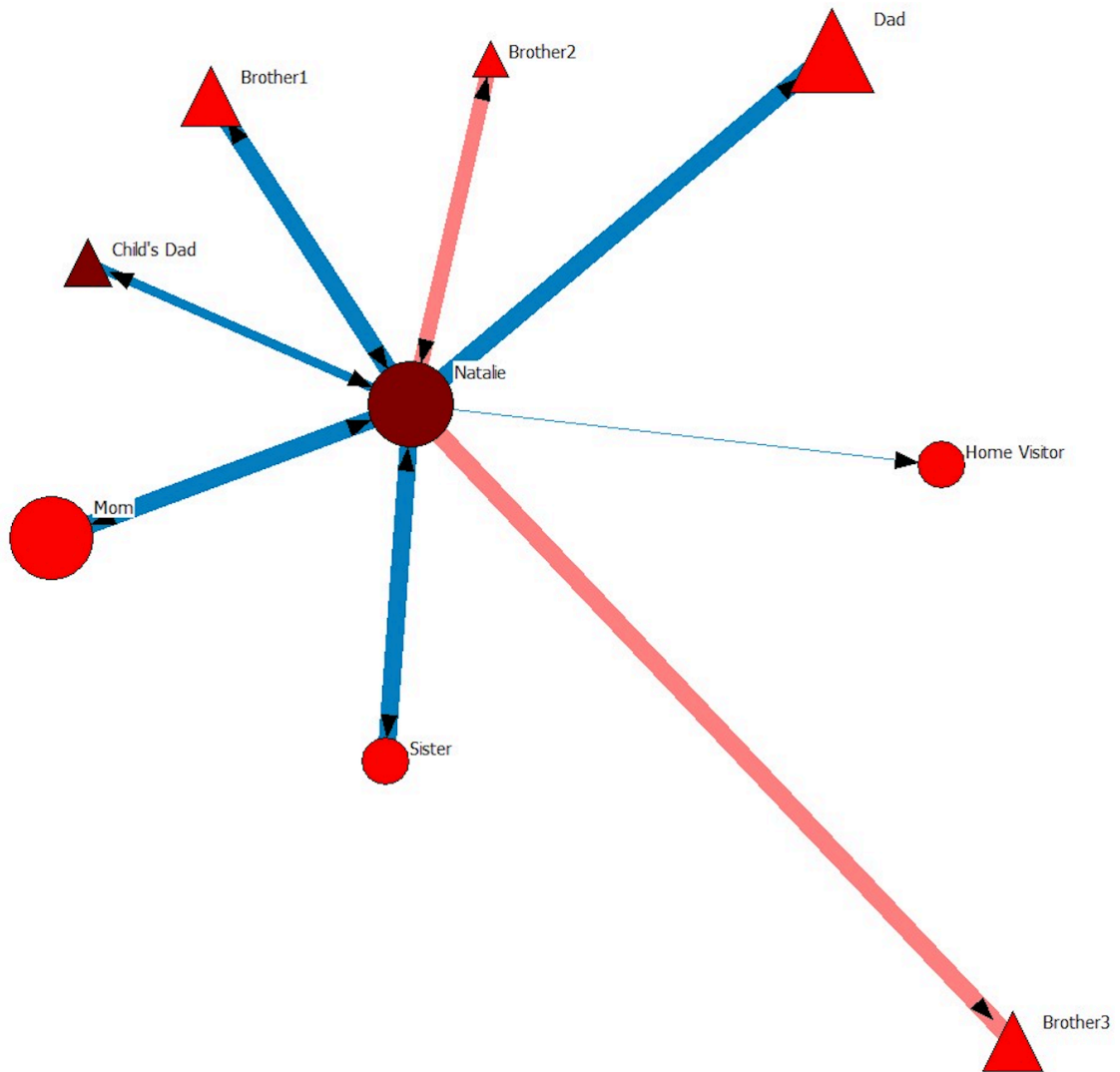
Natalie has lived in Battle Creek her whole life. When asked what has kept her in Battle Creek Natalie shared that she never really thought about moving. Most of her family is here. Natalie has three brothers, one sister, and two half-sisters, and another half-brother. And I’ve got nieces and nephews, too. When asked what she likes about Battle Creek she says, “nothing really...If there is any one thing that pops into my mind, it’s just that my family is here. I guess that probably now that Ariel is in school, there are different activities that I can be involved in, that I haven’t been involved in before.”

When asked what she would change about her city, Natalie responded, “There are not good people everywhere. I would look for nicer people, nicer neighborhoods, and less violence. I wish people would be more respectful. That’s the same with the people being nicer.”

Natalie’s Ego Network

Below is a picture of Natalie’s ego network. The Key for the Diagram explains the meaning of the sizes, shapes and colors, etc. For example, Natalie’s Mom is represented by a large red circle, meaning that her Mom is female, white and is one of the older people in Natalie’s network. The blue line represents that her Mom lives in Battle Creek, the length of the line represent that they are I more frequent communication than the longer lines, and the thickness of the line represents the amount of time they have been in relationship.

Figure 31 Natalie's Ego Network



Key:

Length – frequency of contact (the shorter the line the more frequent the contact)

Size – age category (the larger the circle the older the person²⁹)

Color of the nodes– race/ethnicity (Red for white; Blue for 2 or more races)

Shape – gender (circle for female, triangle for male)

²⁹ This is true for all nodes except the ego – due to formatting the ego was made bigger to allow for reciprocal arrows to be displayed.

Weight (thickness) of the line (the period of time the relationship has existed, the thicker the line the longer the relationship has existed)

Line color – geographic location, blue is in Battle Creek and red is not in Battle Creek

Narrative to Support Ego Network

Natalie has a network of 8 people, the majority (7) of whom are family members. Her network tends to be more male dominated with nearly 63% male, consisting of her three brothers, father and the father of her children. There is little diversity in race/ethnicity with 7 people identified as White and one person Black/African American. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied with 2 people in Management Occupations; 2 people in Sales and Related Occupations, and a range of others including Protective Services and Community and Social Services – one person is unemployed. Natalie also had very regular contact with 88% of her network in daily or weekly communication. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is weighted toward more longer relationships with 75% being more than 25 years.

When asked if Natalie thought she got the support she needed from her network she responded,

“As much as they can give, yea, but not all of the time, because they got their own things going on too. So, I don’t try to bring things to them to add to their pressure.”

When asked what type of support she might need that she is not getting, Natalie wasn’t sure. She expressed concern again regarding not wanting people to feel pressure to help.

“...but if I need money, I wouldn't want them to bend over backwards. I wouldn't want to have to do that.”

She said she guessed if she really needed money she hoped they might have it but many times they might not. Natalie mentions that when someone in the family has a need they try to come together to support each other. This includes her mom and her brothers and sometimes her sister. Natalie shared that since the second interview he dad has gone through a lot and had to be admitted to a long-term care hospital. Natalie shared that her dad being in poor health has been very stressful. Natalie goes to her mom, sister and the girls dad sometimes for emotion support. In describing her relationship with the girl’s father Natalie says, “Yeah, it's okay. It's the best it can be. He's a good guy. He is a good father, and I know there are a lot of fathers that are not involved in their kids' lives, and that's important to them.”

Below is some additional description Natalie provided about certain people in her network:

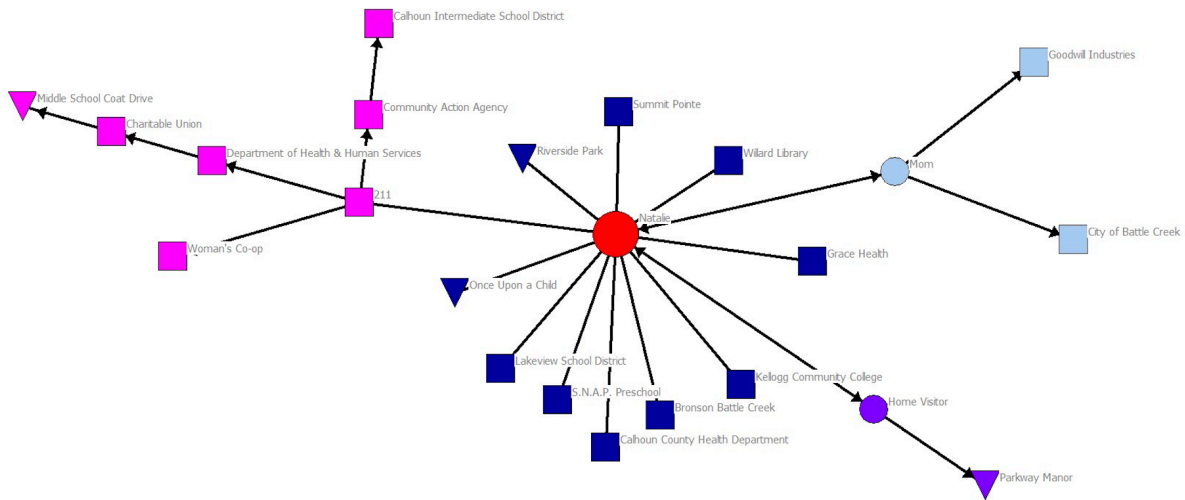
Home Visitor	According to Natalie, home visiting has been wonderful. Most of the time Ali is there too and both girls love it. The home visitor is usually there for an hour and a half. She helps if you have a question or a concern. She is employed through Head Start. Natalie shared that she has helped her learn about play activities for Lindy to participate in. When the home visitor comes they sing, do activities, asks Lindy questions to see what she knows. During the first home visit the focus was on filling out a lot of paperwork.
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Brother 1	Comes to Natalie for support regarding relationship questions. Natalie asks him car questions. He lets her borrow money. Sometimes he watches the girls. Lives about 10-15 minutes away. Natalie tends to get a lot of information from her brother. He has two children ages 13 and 14. "Yeah, my brother is on top of stuff. He knows certain things that are going on"
Sister	Are in touch 3-4 times a week. Comes to Natalie for money or if she needs a ride to the store or something
Mom	Comes to Natalie for support if she needs money or something. Example of support includes money, need to know how to cook something. She watches the kids.
Dad	Depends on how he is acting "Three times out of the month if he is being a butt"
Childs's Dad	Nikki gives him a ride to work sometimes. Girls see him every day. Nikki goes to him for support if she doesn't have any pull ups. Emergency she would contact him as well. Not together. "He's a good dad. They love him very much". She drops the girls off and then picks them back up. He can't keep them over night because he works third shift. The girls see their father almost every day..

Interactions with the Formal Network

Below is a different iteration of Natalie's ego network that continues to include only the individuals that referred her to an organization or opportunity as well as the organizations or opportunities that Natalie identified during her interview as important to her as she is raising her children. The value of this visual is that it shows which people and organizations served at entry points (Bridges/Cultural Brokers/Front Porches (Valente, 2012; Callejas et al., 2010; Ishimaru et al., 2016, Lareau, 2005) for Natalie. Some organizations/people opened up many opportunities while others provided a connection to just one or two other opportunities.

Figure 32 Natalie's Expanded Network



Narrative to Support Ego Network

Natalie's network shows that she had three entry points to other resources including 211, an organization in the Formal Network, her Mom, and the Home Visitor she works for Lindy. 211 has been a significant entry point for Natalie connecting her directly or indirectly to six other organizations, three of which are in the Network Core. Natalie has direct connections with a significant amount of organizations within the Formal Network. Even though her entry point number was small, it still shows that her Informal Network plays the largest role in getting her connected to other opportunities. However, according to Natalie, her network doesn't help her get connected to different services because, "they don't use them... I told my sister about them, but it wouldn't help my brothers or anything, because they wouldn't be eligible."

Below is some additional description Natalie provided about certain organizations in her network:

211	Called regarding a shut off notice and they provided inaccurate information regarding Women's co-op who said they shouldn't have been on the list because they don't have any services available for shut offs. Decided to call 211 because she didn't have the money to pay her bill.
Bronson Battle Creek	Have taken the girls to the emergency room. When her children were born Imagination Library paperwork was handed out at the hospital
Calhoun County Health Department	Enrolled in WIC- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.
Charitable Union	Natalie describes her experiences with Charitable union as good. "You can go and get clothes for your children and yourself, and they got shoes and toys down there, too. They have all types of different stuff. Well, you can only go there once a month... actually those who have Medicaid or food stamps are allowed to go down there. And I think it might have been years ago for my sister's friend that

	used to go down there and get stuff for her kids before I actually had children.” Unfortunately when they went to charitable Union they didn’t have the sizes she needed.
City of Battle Creek	May have gone there to pay a water bill
Community Action	Help with shutoff notices
Department of Health & Human Services	"If they deny you for assistance, they just tell you about 211. But you have to go through them to get a denial letter for some of the organizations in order for 211 to help you." Also used EBT. But I think I mentioned to you before that I don't have my kids' father paying child support. We don't have money. Since I don't do that, they don't help me; they only help the children, like for food and medical issues. But for a bill, they won't help me. So, I would expect more from them." Natalie shared she doesn't call the DHS anymore unless she needs a denial letter for something else.
Kellogg Community College	Took some classes
Lakeview School District	Nieces go there
S.N.A.P. Preschool	Went there as a child.
Summit Pointe	Went down there before the girls were born. Went twice for some counseling. Always known about it. "I went through counseling. I went for a few sessions. The lady seemed nice, but I just had a lot going on at that time, and I never went back."
Willard Library	Went there on a field trip with Ali

Case 7 – Mara and Jack

Family Overview

Mara is a 30-year-old mother of three children Simon, 7, Rachel, 6 and Jack, 3. Her income is below 100% of poverty and both she and her children identify as Italian. During the first interview Mara was unemployed. By the last interview Mara has started a job at Denso. She shared that she has been working 12-hour days. She found this job by doing an internet search of jobs available without work experience and she found Kelly Services which in turn got her connected with Denso. Mara works second shift from 3-11 p.m. and shared that she stays awake at night and sleeps in the morning. She shared that she feels like she is, “working to live instead of living to work.”

Mara spends a lot of her time caring for her seven-year-old son who has a cognitive impairment. As a result of this, Mara explains in reference to her three-year-old, “We don’t do a lot with him, really. In the morning, of course, we stay at home. I have to wake up. Then, I bring him here [Preschool Center 2] now, and after that, I have the other children. They play in the backyard. Sometimes we go to the park, but not a lot. We don't do a lot, especially with the little one. But I can try. I can try to do more, too.” Mara explains that her three-year-old Jack, enjoys watching TV and that he really likes the movie, Minions. She goes on to explain:

He is a difficult child, in my opinion. He doesn't listen at all. We have a little problem with food. He eats only pasta. He loves cookies. Nothing else. When we were in Italy, he was eating meat, vegetables, and everything you put on the table. But when we came

here, the food was different, and the time was different. And he stopped eating everything. Now he is eating only pasta, and we can say he loves sweet things. Nothing else. We have tried a little bit of outpatient therapy, but it didn't help at all. Then we stopped it....Jack likes to play outside and go to the playground. He also likes a show about robots called "My Big Friend" " He likes TV. He likes cars. He plays with little toy cars, trucks, tractors, and everything that has wheels. I just finished potty training him. During night and day, he has done well. I have taken four days, really.

Mara was born in the United States to an American father and a German mother who worked together on a military base in Italy. When they divorced, Mara moved with her mom and sisters back to Italy. She was three years old. Until last year Mara had never met or talked to her father. Mara explains her perspective of the United States, "But the USA, I think I always wanted to come here. Italy is expensive. You can't own a house, because it's only for rich people. Here, in one year, we bought this house. It's huge. And we have a normal life pretty much there, but you feel better here. It's different. In Italy, they think America is the country of miracle. I don't know. It is not. Maybe you have more problems than Italy, but it's how the people are. They are more genuine here."

Mara continues to explain her family:

My husband is not legal here... he is here with something like a visa, but it's shorter than an actual visa. We are getting papers for the green card and everything. He is 100 percent Italian. He is from Naples. It is in southern Italy. He likes it here. I don't know. I still don't know. He is pretty chill. He loves Italy. He comes here for me, because in here, you can have a future. He's happy about the home we bought. He's happy about the kids. Maybe he's a little bit sad, because the kids are starting to speak English, and he doesn't understand them. He's learning, but because you are an adult, maybe you take more time. It's more difficult for him. Then this is the only thing he is not really happy about. He is not working because he can't work. We have this paper going on that we have to wait for. I don't know how much. Maybe one month, one year, and then he's not doing a lot. He doesn't like to come pick up the kids, or go to the grocery store, because then he has to interact with the people, and he is not ready yet Then, I have my three kid and my Chihuahua. This is my family.

When asked what makes her family unique, Mara shared:

I always try to be show that I am perfect – show that I have a clean house, perfect kids, a perfect life – but after five minutes, if I understand the person in front of me enough, I can say we're not perfect, but I like it. My kids don't have a lot of rules. So far, in the home, or outside, they can do whatever they want. They know the living room should be safe. Of course, they don't go play in the road. In the house, they can't paint on the wall, but they can watch TV. They play a lot. Before everything, they do homework. We have basic rules, but after all, they can do everything. If they don't kill each other, then we work. We are not unique, but we work, and so far, I like it.

During the first interview Mara was married and living with her husband and children. By the last interview, Mara's life situation had changed dramatically. She and her husband had separated. Mara also had started a relationship with a boyfriend and had just found out she was pregnant. Mara moved into an apartment near Denso and found a roommate and Facebook. We spent much of the third interview discussing the major changes in Mara's life. Her ex-husband moved back to Italy with their three children. Mara reflected on this difficult situation sharing, "the relationship to mom and kid and father and kid is different. I want my kids of course, but for different reasons we decided he is going to keep them. For me it is pretty ok. The only thing I want is to see them. "It's hard but at the same time I think it is the best" The plan is that she will see the kids in the summer and she had been calling them every night. She shared this has been "worse than what I thought". She is no longer sure if she will stay in Battle Creek and her sister has moved to Arizona. She was pretty flustered by the situation when we met because it was all so new. She was planning to talk with her sister about the situation. She shared that she typically tries to figure things out by herself but that this situation was different and she needed some help. She was planning to go see Grace Health.

Getting Connected to Preschool

Mara found out about the opportunity at Preschool Center 2 on the internet, the Head start Website. "Internet Of course, when you don't know anything about the rules here about everything, I am always on Facebook. If it's not Facebook, I take time to understand the age of kindergarten, first grade, and so on. After that, because kindergarten in Italy is free, and we start at two years old in Rio. It's really different."

Mara shared mixed experiences at school for Jack:

Jack hates to go to school, because at home, he wasn't listening. He still is not listening. He was doing crazy thing, but now he's a little bit better. He tries to put energy here in the school. He cries only for coming home. I completed the form a little bit on the internet, and they contacted me. I think, "Oh my god." I completed the form for the next year – four years old – and they contacted me four days after, and said, "If you want, we have space for this year, too. At that time, he wasn't potty trained. Then I did everything in four days before he started. But I was happy that I had him all prepared, and here we are.

Reflections on Experience as a Parent

When asked what she sees as the rewards of being a parent, Mara responded:

Well, when I was young, I was a bad girl, but I always wanted kids, because I had fun. And you can have fun during the rest of your life. But you wake up the next day, and then you have nothing. You had fun, and now, I go to bed late, because my time is from 9:00 am to midnight. And then, I try to go to bed early, but I know it's late. When you wake up, you have your kids. You are doing something for the kids. You stand up from the bed for your kids. They make me crazy. They are my little devils. But without them, it's not the same. Maybe I can have fun for a couple of days, but after that, you don't have

anything else. You don't have a schedule in your life. Maybe a career, but it's not the same." "Without them, it is not life for me."

When asked about the challenges of parenthood: Mara responded:

Alex. Of course, my life changed when I had him. If he were not disabled, maybe it wouldn't be the same. It was my first pregnancy that was a disaster. My first kid was a disaster. And really, when you are a first-time mom, you want a healthy baby, the perfect pregnancy, and mine wasn't that. Yeah, he taught me a lot. He taught me patience. I don't have it anymore, but with him, I sat there for hours to read a book. I sat there for hours to sing a song. Then, it's difficult. And now, after the third kid, you can see the difference. For the first kids, you watch the pacifier go on the floor. You always have wipes or diapers. Jack grew up in the jungle. The pacifier on the floor, okay. I put in my mouth, I put in his mouth. Wipes? Yeah, when I remember. It's really this. The third kid may have grown up by him or herself, or maybe you are more confident in them, or in yourself, and you know that they can meet it, not like your first kid. But I am happy.

Mara's unexpected parenting experiences follow:

You don't have a life. I had a good life... I had a lot of friends. I had a normal life. You go out for you. Now, I don't have friends. I go out... When I go out, I do grocery shopping, gas, and doctor, only for the kids. I don't have a life. Sometimes I miss it a lot. But other times, I don't have time to miss it, and then, yes, this is the only little thing.

When Mara describes how she envisioned herself as a parent she explains:

Better. I never thought I was good in that situation. I think I can always be better. I don't have enough patience now. I don't pass enough time with my kids." When asked to clarify what she meant by 'not passing enough time with the kids, Mara explains, "Well, because of doctor appointments, and because the girl starts cheerleading, then I am so busy, that when I have time, I like to lay on the couch and not do anything. And this is wrong, because before, I was reading books, I was doing activities, and I was doing a lot. Now, I don't have that magic fairy tale, and I'm tired. Maybe now, because she's going to school too, I start to have more energy, but when they come home, it's like I take him home. After ten minutes, I have the other two, everything is better, and then you feel, "Oh my god, they have to go back into school." And then you don't want to spend time with them, then I put them outside in the backyard to play. They love it anyway, but I know I can be better. If there's something I like it, there's a reason, because this is me. I continue to say I can be better at everything." "I can sing songs. Maybe this is good. They continue to want the lullaby during the night, and this is the only good thing I continue to do. I know they are big enough, and they don't need it, but they continue to it.

Living in Battle Creek

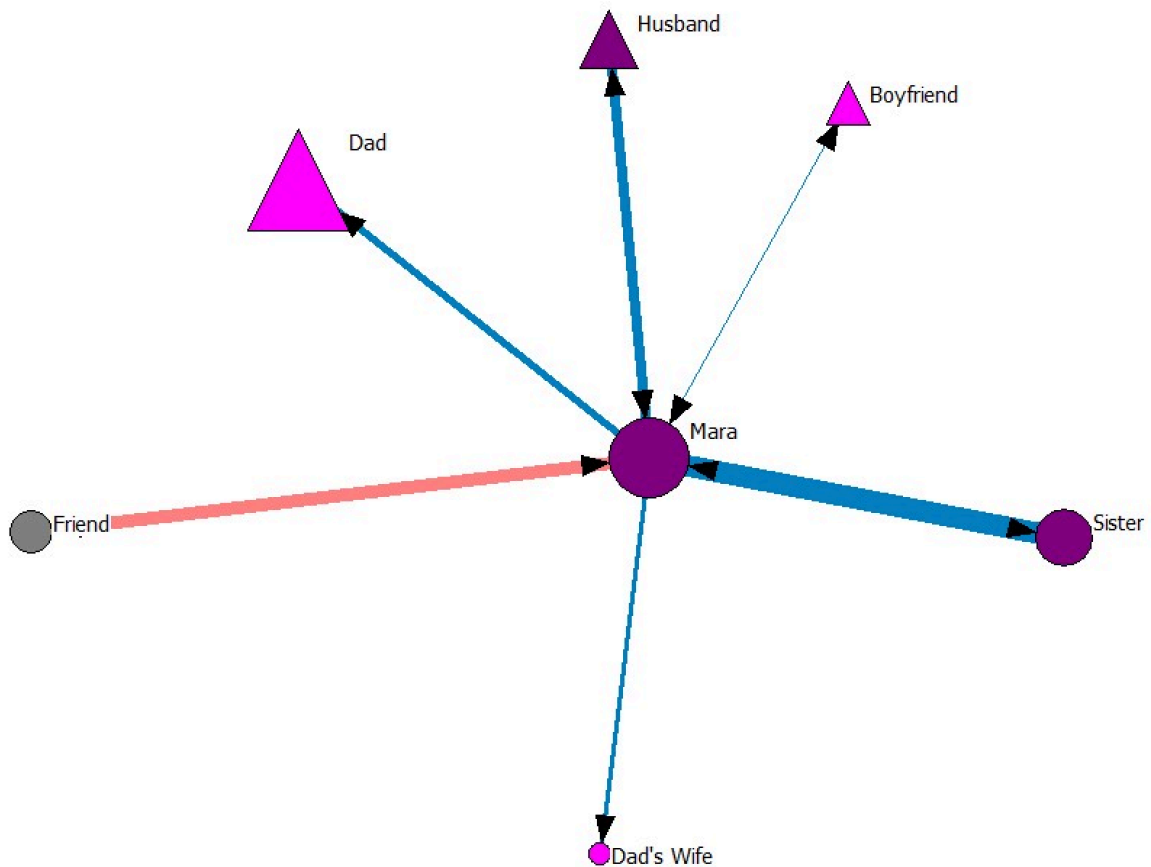
Mara likes that Battle Creek is little and quiet. She also likes that it has lots of green and several parks. What she doesn't like is that there isn't much to do here. Mara responded:

What I don't like is that there is no life. There is nothing here. Not only for the kids, but in general. Maybe it's because it's really different from Italy, but there are not a lot of coffee shops. You can't sit down outside and enjoy a coffee with your friends. Now, it's everything in the car. You can stop to take a coffee in the car. You can stop at the pharmacy to take your medicine in the car. You can stop at the bank in the car. You are not going to have a relationship in the car. This is wrong. I think all this helping you to stay in the car is wrong. I enjoy a walk with the stroller, or with the kids on the bicycle. We love it. But here, it's different. I went to this store by foot in Italy. Here, we say, "Let's take the car. Why not?" It's weird. it's really weird."

Mara's Ego Network

Below is a picture of Mara's ego network. The Key for the Diagram explains the meaning of the sizes, shapes and color, etc. For example, Mara's Dad is represented by a large, red triangle signifying that he is Male, White and the oldest person in Mara's network. The length of the line represents that they are in frequent communication, the width represents the amount of time they have had a relationship, which is near the middle range for her network, and the color shows that he lives in Battle Creek. The one-way arrow signifies a relationship that is not reciprocal.

Figure 33 Mara's Ego Network



Key:

Length – frequency of contact (the shorter the line the more frequent the contact)

Size – age category (the larger the circle the older the person³⁰)

³⁰ This is true for all nodes except the ego – due to formatting the ego was made bigger to allow for reciprocal arrows to be displayed.

Color of the nodes– race/ethnicity (Red for white; Blue for 2 or more races)

Shape – gender (circle for female, triangle for male)

Weight (thickness) of the line (the period of time the relationship has existed, the thicker the line the longer the relationship has existed)

Line color – geographic location, blue is in Battle Creek and red is not in Battle Creek

Narrative to Support Ego Network

Mara has a network of six people. When asked for other friends or relatives she would like to include Mara said “nope” Five of the six people are family members and one is a life-long friend who lives in Italy. Her network is diverse in terms of race, gender and age with 50% being White, 33% Italian, and 17% Peruvian; 50% male and 50% female; and ages ranging from 24 to 60s. Five people in her network live in Battle Creek (at the time of this question her husband was still in Battle Creek) and one person lives in Italy. Of the six people only two are employed, her sister in Sales and Related Occupations and her Boyfriend in Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations. Mara is in very regular contact with her entire network in daily or weekly communication. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is mixed with half of her network in relationships below 4 years, two people in the middle range of 10-20 years and one person she has been in contact with nearly her whole life. Mara did mention her mother and one additional sister, but they are not included in her personal network because they are no longer a part of her life and they are not in communication. When asked if she felt like she was getting the support she needed from her Informal Network, Mara shared that she needs more help for herself, especially in her current situation.

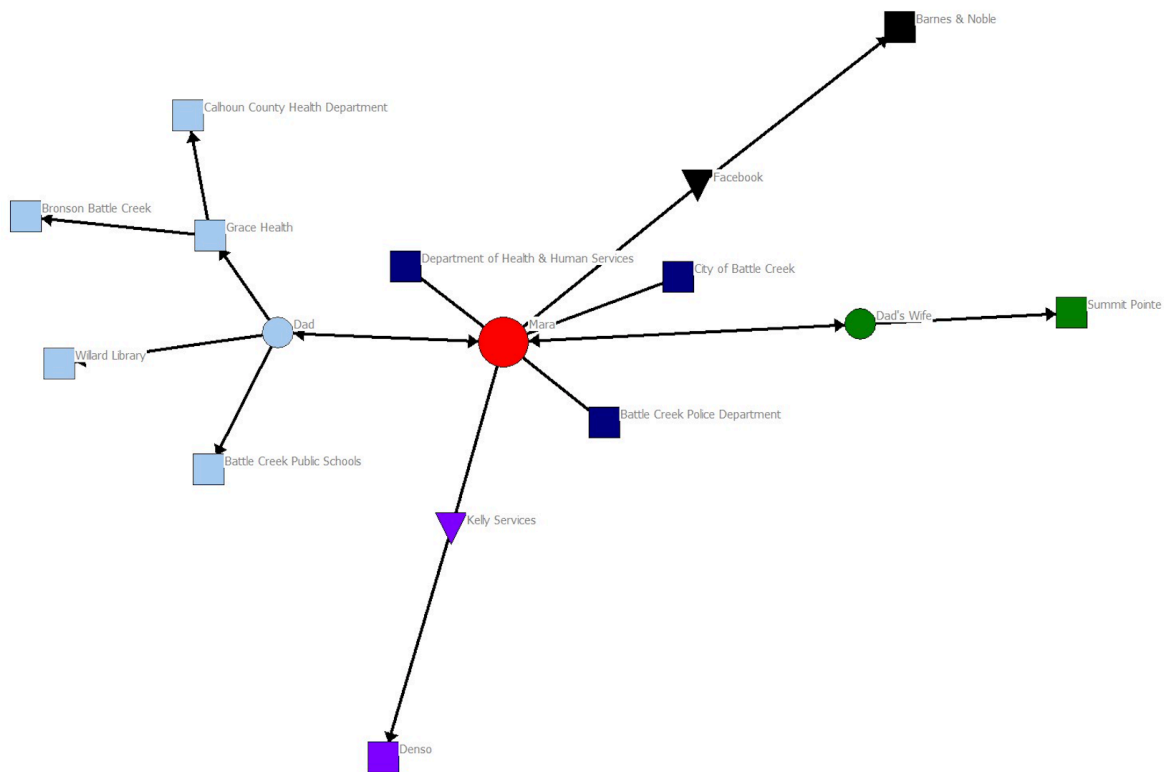
Below is some additional description Mara provided about certain people in her network:

Sister	During the first interview Mara was living with her sister, but her sister had moved in with her boyfriend by the second interview. Mara describes her as the type of aunt that likes to give presents, but her type of lifestyle isn't to babysit the children - if Mara really needed it she would, but she doesn't ask because she knows she doesn't like it
Husband	During the second interview Mara shared they had decided to get divorced but they hadn't decided what to do. One possibility was to go back to Italy with the kids. When they divorce the husband will keep the kids.
Dad	She sees him "Every day because we live in the same house". He helps to take the kids to the doctor.
Dad's Wife	Go to her sometimes to talk about emotional problems.
Boyfriend	He has a six-year-old son that lives in Indiana with his mother. He has seen his son about 3 times in six years.

Interactions with the Formal Network

Below is a different iteration of Mara's ego network that continues to include only the individuals that referred her to an organization or opportunity as well as the organizations or opportunities that Mara identified during her interview as important to her as she is raising her children. The value of this visual is that it shows which people and organizations served at entry points (Bridges/Cultural Brokers/Front Porches (Valente, 2012; Callejas et al., 2010; Ishimaru et al., 2016, Lareau, 2005) for Mara. Some organizations/individuals opened up many opportunities while others provided a connection to just one or two other opportunities.

Figure 34 Mara's Expanded Network



Narrative to Support Ego Network

Mara's network shows that she has 4 entry points into other organizations, two were people – her Dad and Dad's Wife and two were organizations that were not part of the Formal Network. Mara's Dad has clearly been a huge connector for Mara introducing her to three organizations within the Network Core of the Formal Network. Mara's network really makes the case that it was her Informal Network that is getting her connected to the Formal Network as none of her four entry points were in the Formal Network, but they all referred her to an organization(s) within the Formal Network. Mara's network consists almost exclusively of health and mental health organizations, educational or literacy focused institutions, and an employer. Mara shared

that she looks a lot of things up on the internet as evidenced by her note of Facebook. Mara also thinks Grace Health is the most important service to her and they could do everything there.

Below is some additional description Mara provided about certain organizations within her network:

Barnes & Noble	Reading time for kids with Jack. He really didn't like it so they didn't go back
Battle Creek Police Department	Found gun one time walking near the house and she brought it to the police
Battle Creek Public Schools	Children go there and they took part in the summer food program
Bronson Battle Creek	Lots of visits for oldest son
City of Battle Creek	Went there to pay a ticket
Denso	Had been looking on the internet and found out about this through Kelly services, a job site. Ended up becoming employed there.
Department of Health & Human Services	Wasn't sure but thinks she had gone there to sign up for disability.
Grace Health	Go for the doctor, dentist. Mara's Father suggested "We have everything there"
Summit Pointe	Autism services for Simon. Her Father's Wife goes there
Willard Library	Went there with Jack to do some activities. He played with the toys they have there and Mara likes to check out some books herself. Before he started school they would go there for entertainment.

Case 7 - Jamila and Karl

Family Overview

Jamila is a 32-year-old mother of three children, two daughters 13 and 10 and one son, Karl. During our first interview Jamila shared that was engaged to Karl's father and by the last interview they were married. Jamila lives below 250% of poverty and identified as Black/African American. Her children are also African American. Jamila is a preschool teacher. To someone who doesn't know her, Jamila would describe herself as follows, "Well, I take a lot of time to open up, I guess. I am a very goofy person. Before anybody hears one side of me, I prefer to explore things a little bit more before I show that side of me. I plan weddings. I am actually getting married in May." She describes her family as "...less traditional. We are actually a blended family". Her fiancé has two other sons – one that is seven and one that is four. They've moved in together and have been together for the last six years. Karl and his two sisters live with Jamila and her Fiancé, and his sons live with them part time. The girls go to their dad's house on the weekend and in the summer they rotate weeks.

Jamila shares:

We like to do family movie nights on the weekends, because we work so much on the weekdays. They are all into sports. My oldest daughter is in volleyball. My younger daughter is playing soccer right now. My fiancé's oldest son is playing football, and then, his four-year-old son is playing soccer. We are put in every direction throughout the week, so we try to make that time on the weekends with a stay-at-home family night, or I would go out to movies or something like that...When we are out, we get compliments, like, "Oh, you guys look so good together. This is a nice-looking family." We get compliments everywhere we go. I don't know if they're shy, or if they show if they are happy, or what, but people compliment about our family all the time.

With the girls, we get compliments about them being really well-behaved, and the boys are on the rough side. We may get some stares every now and then. But for the most part, we get compliments about the family.

The kids attend four different schools in two different school districts. Jamila gets up at 5:45 and tries to leave by house by 6:45 and drops Karl and her Fiancé's son at her sisters, her Fiancé's other son at his daycare and then takes her daughters to the bus stop by their dad's house. Upon reflecting on what she's just shared Jamila says, "Saying it out loud, it's like, "Oh my goodness! This is so much!" "It's so hard" But Jamila says her sister helps a lot in the morning.

Jamila describes Karl, "He's such a boy. He's so busy. He loves basketball. We have a basketball room in the house, so he likes doing that. He really just enjoys running and flipping around, and just about any boyish activities." "He likes to sort colors. What I did was just have construction paper, and I cut out squares of the red, yellow, blue, and orange, and we have these sorting bears, and he puts the bear on the color that we have got cut out. He likes watching TV, and he likes to cuddle with me a lot, and when I read him books, and stuff like that – anything where we can just be close together, where I'm right by him." She also shares that he likes to eat – whatever she cooks he eats.

Getting Connected to Preschool

Jamila has been connected to preschools for a long time. When her older daughter was six months old she found out about Head Start because her mom worked at one of the locations. Also, when Jamila was in high school she would volunteer in the classrooms.

Reflections on Experience as a Parent

Jamila shared that she gets joy from being a parent, “Just when he masters certain skills that I try to teach him, like when he starts doing the things himself, I just feel like I'm doing a good job.” A challenge she is facing as a parent has been figuring out how to support Karl with some of the concerns she has regarding his speech. She shared that she mentioned it to his doctor and they referred Karl to get his hearing tested. Once they ruled that out they decided to start speech therapy. Jamila shared, “Right now, his speech is challenging. He's not really bad when he's talking, but with a lot of his words, you can't really understand. We actually just started taking him to speech therapy Monday. We are going to do a little bit more of that.” Jamila shared she wished she had “gotten to it a little sooner... I have always had doubts. I contradicted myself, like, "No, it's not really a big deal. It will come when it comes. Every child is different." But that is what goes through my mind a lot with him.”

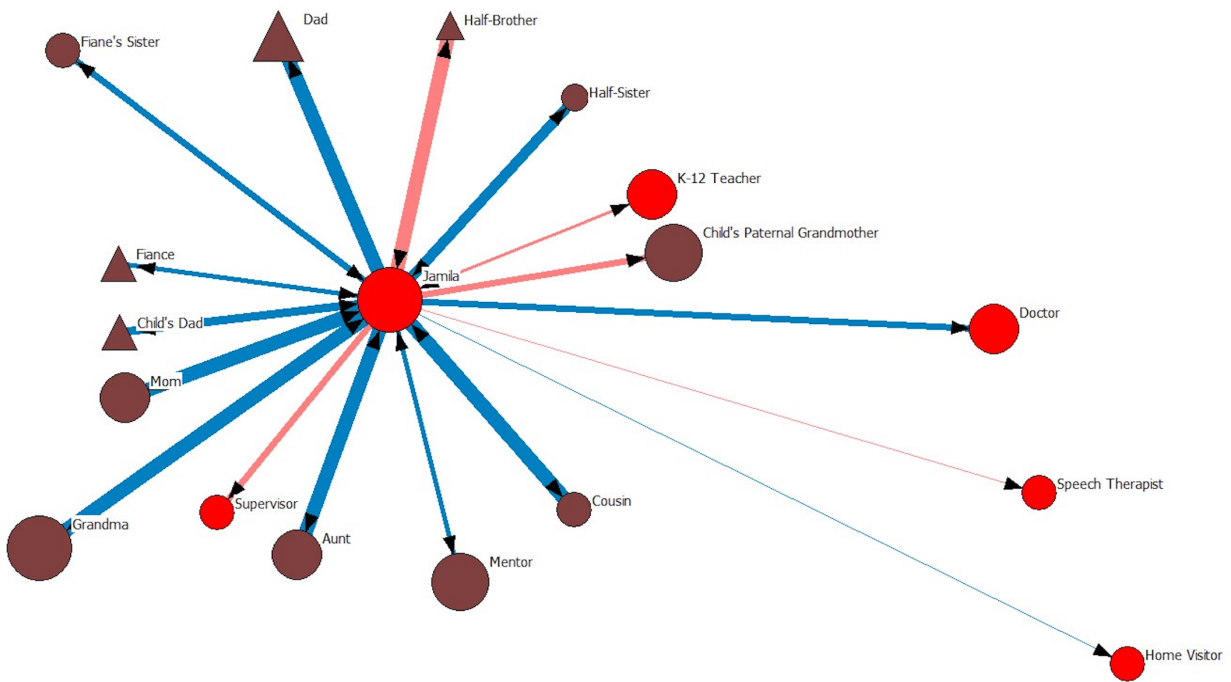
When asked what was unexpected for her as a parent she said, “It's always a smack in the face about how much time I actually have on my hands before babies. Before I had my first child, I was like, ‘Oh my goodness, I have no time on my hands... I have so much time to myself.’ And then, I thought that was bad. And then I had my second daughter, and I was thinking, "Oh my goodness, what was I thinking? I have no time to myself!" And then, I had Karl, and I was like, "What was I thinking?" I get all these smacks in the face.”

When asked what would help her achieve the ideal situation as a parent, Jamila shared she wished she had done things differently regarding school. Jamila is currently working and going to school for a degree in Human Services. “If I would have handled school just a few years earlier, I would not be spreading myself so thin. It's not really anything with any more services I would need, I guess, but it's more of something that I should have been doing differently, I guess.”

Aspirations for Child

When asked what her aspirations are for Karl, “I just want him to have a bright future, really. I just want him to be successful, be able to handle himself in different situations, keep him cultured”

Figure 35 Jamila's Ego Network



Key:

Length – frequency of contact (the shorter the line the more frequent the contact)

Size – age category (the larger the circle the older the person³¹)

Color of the nodes– race/ethnicity (Red for white; Blue for 2 or more races)

Shape – gender (circle for female, triangle for male)

Weight (thickness) of the line (the period of time the relationship has existed, the thicker the line the longer the relationship has existed)

Line color – geographic location, blue is in Battle Creek and red is not in Battle Creek

Narrative to Support the Ego Network

³¹ This is true for all nodes except the ego – due to formatting the ego was made bigger to allow for reciprocal arrows to be displayed.

Jamila has a network of 17 people. Her network tends to exhibit homophily based on race, gender, age, geographic location, and relationships with 71% Black/African American; 76% female; 53% between the ages of 20 and 40; 71% living in Battle Creek and 65% family members. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied with 2 people in Management Occupations, 3 people in Educational Instruction and Library Occupations; 2 people in Healthcare Support Occupations; and 4 people in Production Occupations. Jamila also has very regular contact with 64% of her network in daily or weekly communication. The length of the relationship of the alters in her network is fairly spread out with about a third less than 10 years, a third between 10-20 and a third between 20-30. Jamila wishes that she had more support from her networks, but notes that for the most part she thinks everybody does really good.

When asked if Jamila is getting the support she needs from her network she explains:

I think everybody does really good. I always have my complaints. "You could take the kids more - The kids need to get to know you a little more." But other than that, no. I had the kids I need to take care of them, so I'm hard on myself, but I wish that a couple of them would be more supportive, like my dad, mainly. When my brother comes here, he gets the kids, takes them to the park, or out to eat, or anything, so it's just to spend time with them. I just wish I got something from my dad a little more, but he's just so busy. He works. He's older, and he's working in a factory, and he's working third shift. You are a grandpa. My grandma had us every weekend. She took us to church every Sunday. She kept us for summer vacations and stuff like that. I'm just not used to grandparents being the way my parents are right now.

Jamila goes on to talk about the role her grandparents played in her life when she was younger,

She used to take us to Florida every summer. She took us to Disney World. And my other grandma did too. This one is my dad's grandmother that I'm talking about right now. But about my mom's mom, we used to spend whole summers at her house. I'm just so used to grandparents keeping grandchildren. I don't know what's going on. I don't know. And they're not any younger than their parents were when they had us.

When asked why she thinks it is different these days she said she think it's different times.

Jamila shared more about her mom's situation,

"Like my mom, I was blaming her boyfriend. But my dad has really no excuse. He's in the same condition my grandma was in, and she worked third shift. She worked at Kellogg's, not Post, but that's the same thing. She was not retired or anything. She had a husband. He has a wife. All the kids are out in college. My sister, my dad, and me, and my brother, so it was just them two there. I really don't know. I think it's because of the times, honestly." Jamila's mom has been dating her boyfriend since Jamila was in high schools. "...that's the reason I left at 16 years old, because she had a situation. Every time she would get mad at him, she would take it out on us. She kicked me out one time, and I never came back. I was 16, and I got pregnant with my daughter when I was 17 years old. And I just never went back, and she stopped talking to me, lost contact, and her boyfriend

went to jail. And I don't know. Maybe two years before he got out, he reached back out to her, and she has supported him ever since.”

Below is some additional description Jamila provided about certain people in her network:

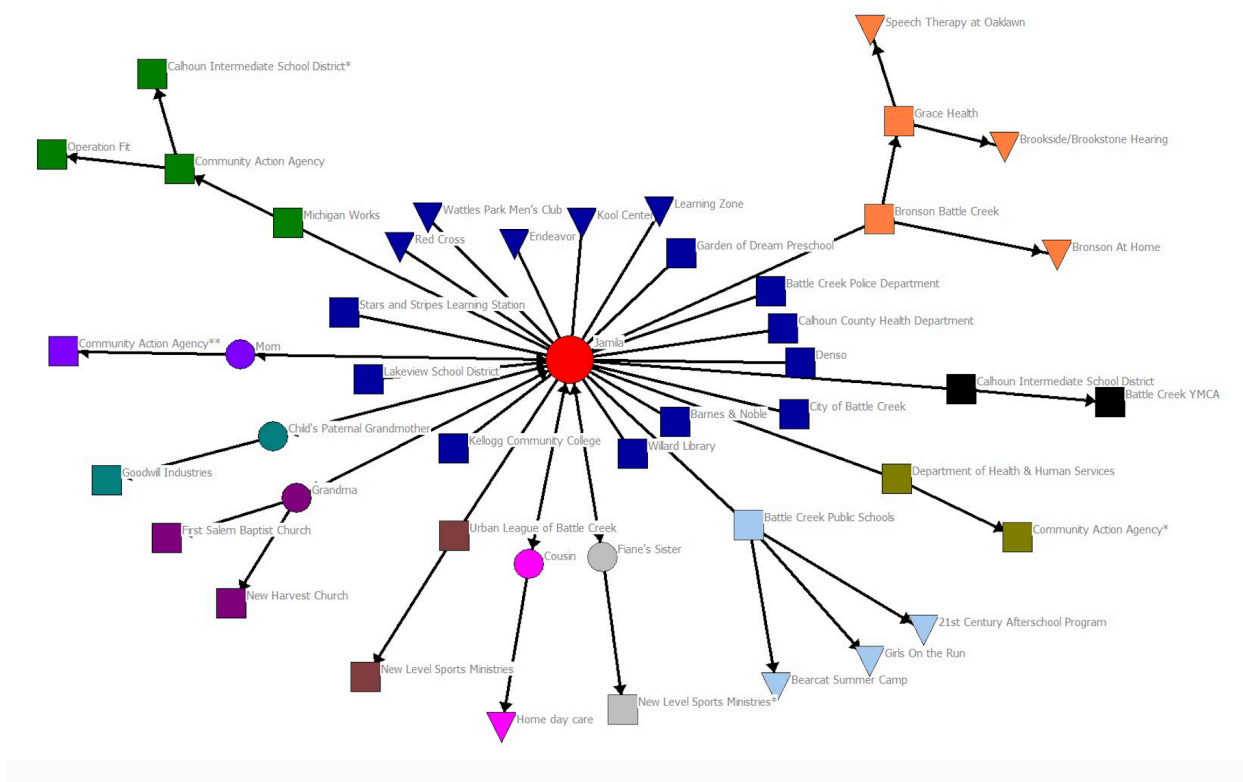
Doctor	Kingston has had ear infections, skin rash. Most recent visit was for Kingston's shots. They are the reason we are doing the speech therapy. Started going to this doctor when her older daughter was born.
Fiancé	Karl's Dad. He just lost his mom and I am his full support system to make sure he is taken care of. "Just trying to get food on the table for him. Taking care of the kids. We trade back and forth on who takes Karl to school." "He is my life partner" "He helps keep me sane"
Mom	Every other week she drops Karl off at her moms and then she takes him to school. Jamila is worried about her mom because she was at her job for a long time, but now her boyfriend got out of prison and she quit her job and it has been in a bad situation "Right now, my hands are washed with her, just until after I have energy for other people's problems, but right now, it's just awful."
Mentor	This women helped her get her child care certification. Jamila used to be in touch with her everyday - someone from the past. When she needed to renew her child care license, she got back in touch with her. She said that she "reaches out to her after a few years, so I still feel a bit comfortable reaching out to her if I had any more issues. "
Supervisor	She comes to me to vent. Jamila goes to her for everyday things, school she is there to help with that kind of stuff. She was her oldest daughters teacher.
K-12 Teacher	They have a wish list of things and Jamila brought in some of those things.
Child's Paternal Grandmother	Jamila goes to her for support to help her get the kids to and from. When she can't talk to the girls' dad she can talk to her. She took the girls when Jerrica was on bedrest with Karl. She used to be a manager at Goodwill "She told me about the good stuff, and at first, I was like, "No way!" But then, I went in on my own, and I found it to be actually pretty good."
Child's Dad	He is the father of her two girls. He comes to her for support with his son who goes to preschool. They work together for school clothes and things like that. Also kind of like a "Life Partner" He also has a daughter.

Cousin	Support mainly just to vent , not expecting anything. "If she complains about money of course I'm going to give her money" She takes the kids when necessary "Whatever I need I can call her for anything"
Dad	"He's not a kid lover, but if I need him to watch the kids, he will take them off my hands for a few hours, or maybe overnight. But yeah, he does that. He's really a home guy. He likes to be home. He's a game man, so he plays games all the time, like during his off time." Jamila's dad is in real-estate and is giving her a house after she gets back from her honeymoon "And actually, he just had a house, because he was into real estate. He had a house that opened up, and we needed a four-bedroom, and he was actually going to let us go there after the wedding. So, all I really have to do is pay the mortgage, and just keep up the mortgage payments, and he's going to let us move there."
Sister	Jamila's sister takes Karl to school for her because she has to be at work at 7:30 but his school doesn't start until 8:15.
Brother	He has a cochlear implant for the hearing impaired. He's majoring in chemical engineering. He's actually going to move to California after he graduates.
Grandma	Grandma that she spent a lot of time with in the summer

Interactions with Formal Network

Below is a different iteration of Jamila's ego network that continues to include only the individuals that referred her to an organization or opportunity as well as the organizations or opportunities that Jamila identified during her interview as important to her as she is raising her children. The value of this visual is that it shows which people and organizations served as entry points (Bridges/Cultural Brokers/Front Porches (Valente, 2012; Callejas et al., 2010; Ishimaru et al., 2016, Lareau, 2005)) for Jamila. Some organizations/individuals opened up many opportunities while others provided a connection to just one or two other opportunities. Jamia also has a significant number of direct connections with organizations.

Figure 36 Jamila's Expanded Network



Narrative to Support Ego Network

Jamila's network shows that her entry points were a mix of individuals and organizations. The people in her network tended to connect Jamila with just one organization with the exception of her Child's Paternal Grandmother who connected her to two organizations, both churches with primarily African American congregations. Bronson Battle Creek and Michigan works were both important entry points for Jamila connecting her to a total of seven additional organizations, three of which are in the Network Core. Worth noting in Jamia's network is that she was referred to Community Action in three different ways, by her Mom, Michigan Works and the Department of Health and Human Services. Her network also has a pattern that shows like organizations tend to refer her to like organizations. For example, the orange referral set starting with Bronson Battle Creek contains all health-related organizations. The light blue referral set starting with Battle Creek Public School referred her to all education and youth related programs. The Urban League, an organization the serves primarily the African American community in Battle Creek, referred her to New Level Sports, a church and sports program also primarily engaging the African American community.

When asked if she felt like she was getting the support she needed from the Formal Network, Jamila responded, "I feel like they are willing to point me in the right direction if I need something. If they didn't offer it, they are willing to point me in the right direction if they know. But I just feel like I could utilize a lot more of this stuff than I have been. Like when it comes to childcare, there's no way. I don't have a daycare center that I want kids to go to; it's just through word of mouth, pretty much. I could really do my research and find out what's better for him, but this is great." When asked about what her ideal situation would look like for getting the support she needs, Jamila shared that having everything all in one place at the school would be

very helpful. For example, when Karl needed to go see a specialist for his ears, it would have been easier for Jamila if this was a service offered at the school. “It’s just little stuff like that – something in which I would not have to stretch myself so thin.”

Below is some additional description Jamila provided about certain organizations in her network:

Barnes & Noble	Buy daughter books here all the time
Battle Creek Police Department	"Domestic violence case one time with a guy I was involved with." Seen a kid walking around early in the morning in his diaper and had to wrap him up and went door to door. "It was a good experience but a terrible situation" Traffic tickets
Battle Creek Public Schools	Children have gone there and Jamila graduated from there.
Battle Creek YMCA	Have a membership and the kids go there to play basketball and for swimming.
Bronson Battle Creek	Gave birth there and they helped her get a breast pump.
Calhoun County Health Department	TB Testing
Calhoun Intermediate School District	Didn't know at first that Early On was through the CISD. Early on is a program offers early intervention services for infants and toddlers, birth to three years of age, with developmental delay(s) and/or disabilities. "I have been talking to them about his speech difficulties, so they came and observed him, and he actually improved his speech in some kind of social way, so we have been doing the play groups through them." Early on referred Jamila and her family to the YMCA for a swimming class playgroup, "The swimming class. He likes the swimming class, and the whole family plans on doing that."
City of Battle Creek	Pay water bill, pay property taxes, marriage license
Community Action Agency	Went through the weatherization program, tried to get transportation for mother in law. Her mom worked there and when she got pregnant her mom told her about all of the service they offered.
Denso	Worked at a quality control job and went to Denso to sort through their parts
Department of Health & Human Services	Bridge card
First Salem Baptist Church	Goes to church sometimes with Grandma, "Was there last Sunday for a fill the pew event". They have Trunk or Treat sometimes, and we take the kids to that. And then, they do this family night on New Year's Eve.
Garden of Dream Preschool	"Stepson was going there when me and his Dad first started dating"
Goodwill Industries	Shop there every now and then
Grace Health	The doctor's referred him to speech therapy at Oaklawn. His doctor had some concerns about his speech, and she gave me a referral for that place.
Kellogg Community College	Working on an Associates in Social Work, enrolled currently. Her mom went to KCC too.
Lakeview School District	"We're going to moving in the area, so I think I'm going to be interacting with them a lot more, since the kids are going to be there. If my younger daughter doesn't get into the STEM school that I wanted her to get into, she'll be in Lakeview Middle School. And my older daughter is actually going to attend Lakeview High School."
Michigan Works	Used them to help build resume, which helped her get a job at Community Action, "Actually, when I was laid off in the summer time, I had to go apply for unemployment benefits during the summer. I am there every year." "Just the higher-ups at work told me. "Okay, you have been here for six months, so you get to apply for unemployment when you're laid off in the summertime."
New Harvest Church	Been there with a co-worker who invited her
New Level Sports Ministries	Fiancé's sister coaches a football team and that is where her fiancé's mom's funeral is – "they have been very helpful" The kids do a summer camp through new level sports "...They take them on day trips, and they go to Full Blast

	Fitness every Friday, just to swim, and just to get them out of the house. It's hard. I do get summer breaks, so I don't work, so I would really like to relax. I would like to get my house in order and relax, so I'm just like, "Go! Have fun! Enjoy summer!" Summer is right around the corner. I'm looking forward to it."
Urban League of Battle Creek	Daughter goes to summer camp
Willard Library	"Some nights we take the kids to get an hour of doing homework, use the computers "

Case 8 Candice and Aniya

Family Overview

Candice is a mother of four children a son who is 7 and three girls 13, 12 and 4. She is married to the father of her four-year-old, Aniyah, but they are not living together right now. Her income is below 100% of poverty. Candice identifies as white and identified her children “bi-racial”. During our first interview Candice was employed at a dentist office. She explains, “In the last couple of months, it has been really bad. The turnover has been really bad...”. During the last interview Candice shared that she went back to working at a doctor’s office she has worked at previously, while she was pregnant with Aniyah. “Well, I was really unhappy at Aspen. And so, I just finally had enough. I told them, "If you guys don't get it together, I'm leaving." It changed for a day. It went right back, and I said, "I'm done with this! I'm not going to keep dealing with this!" So, I had seen an ad in the paper that they were hiring, and I called, and I got the job.” Her hours are better but the pay isn’t quite enough. “No. I mean, it's only three to four days a week. It's supposed to be on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and some Thursdays, so it's not really enough financially, but at the same time, it is good, because my mom is getting to the point where she doesn't want to help anymore. She doesn't want to take my kids to school, and it's really stressing me out. If I'm not at work as much, then I can take them to school.” Since Candice is only work three to four days a week she started doing deliveries for Door Dash and said that she made \$380 in one week.

When asked to describe her family Candice says one work “Chaotic”. When asked to explain Candice said, “There's four of them. They are very busy. And this year, it has calmed down a little bit, because I needed a break. Last year, my oldest was in two dance classes. She did track, she does orchestra, she did cooking club, she was doing band and roller derby. [The second oldest] plays soccer. I try to keep them in things, but it's very busy.” The older three children go to two different school districts which adds to the business. Candice describes her daughter saying, “She likes babies. She likes to play. She likes to boss people around. She is something different. She really is. She repeats the same thing a million times. She just has this fierce disposition. She is not afraid of anything. I think she is one of those really strong-willed people.”

In describing herself, Candice explains the difficult couple of years that she has had, “...I have been through a lot in the last five years. I had her [Aniyah, and after I had her, I got my tubes tied. I was not going to have any more. I had her by Caesarian section, which I had before, and I had a spinal headache afterwards, so that took me a week and a half to even get out of bed. I lost a lot of weight. It was really bad. And then, I had my tubes tied. And then, I found out I had cervical cancer, so I went through a hysterectomy, had a blood clot, went through chemotherapy and radiation, because it had spread through a lymph node. That was quite a bit. My husband has a son as well, but he only has him here and there. At the time, it was like having five kids, and my husband works second shift. I had a newborn baby. I was going through treatments. It was really bad. And then, since then, I was put through menopause, I suffered through depression and anxiety, I didn't work, and he tried to take care of the family. It was hard, because of all these unfortunate events. It's just been really, really rough.” Candice explained that she tried a few times to get counseling but she didn’t have the means – transportation or time.

Getting Connected to Preschool

Prior to going to preschool Candice stayed home with Aniyah. She enrolled her in Head Start because she wanted to get her into something with other kids. Candice got connected to the Head Start program because her older two girls were enrolled when they were younger. For Aniyah she heard an add on the radio – 103.3 FM. The radio add provided the website to go to. Her process for enrolling was an online application and then they contacted her for information such as check stubs and to fill out the paperwork. The process was a positive experience and Candice doesn't believe anything could have made it better.

Candice tries to do the activities that the school has available. The other night they went to a Pete the Cat Party. "I always try to do the free activities I see on Facebook" They do a Trunk or Treat activity in the fall and a party downtown in the summer time. When Candice goes on Facebook to find activities she typically just sees that someone has created an event.

Reflections on Experience as a Parent

Candice has found the "love" to be rewarding about being a parent. As she explains further Candice shares that even though parenting can be frustrating, she could not imagine not having her children. When asked what she has found interesting about being a parent Candice responded "It's hard". She explains that she is a "softie" and hates doing the discipline even though she knows she has to. "I hate being the bad guy. And it's really hard to find that balance, because I know I don't want them to run all over me, but I also don't want them to hate me. Sometimes, it's never enough. I have some very different kids. My oldest is very materialistic. You don't love her if you don't spend thousands of dollars on her. That's very hard for me, so I really struggled with her in not understanding what I do for her. But then, you have her sister, who is only 17 months younger than her, and who's totally opposite. She knows, for the most part, what I do for her. It's hard trying to find that balance between them. And then, the younger ones really don't care." Candice also shared, "I compare myself to other parents sometimes, but sometimes I'm like, "I don't know how they're so calm, or how they don't yell."

When asked where she goes for support Candice shares that she is married and talks to her husband a lot. "But he is a guy, so it's hard for him to understand, plus he is not the older two or [her son's] dad; he's Aniyah's dad. Sometimes, I think that makes it hard for him to understand. Plus, he came from a poor family. His family was lower income. There were five of them – six at one time. He had a brother that passed away. He knows what it is like to not have things."

Aspirations for Child

Candice's aspirations for Aniyah are for her to be strong. "I want her to be strong, and I want her to be independent, basically." Candice doesn't have concerns for Aniyah like struggling in school. She does worry about her being a little "wild". Candice explains she was worried about how she would do in preschool as a result of this.

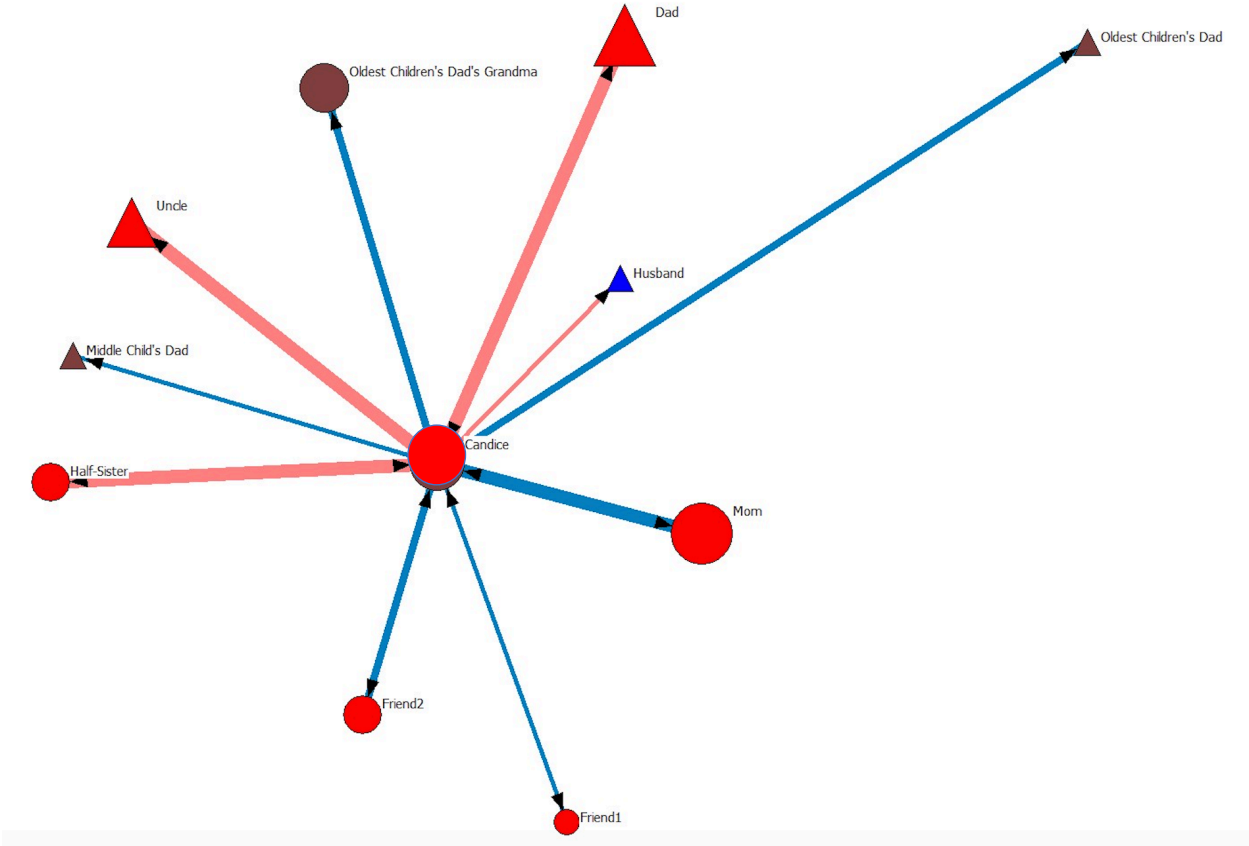
Living in Battle Creek

Candice has lived in Battle Creek since she was 15 years old. Her mom moved for a job at the local hospital. Candice moved away once to Missouri to live near her sister but only stayed for four months. "I could not stay. I think I have just been here, so it's what I know." Candice says what keeps her in Battle Creek is family and a few friends. Her mom is here, her kids dad's mom is here and she is a huge part of their life. What Candice doesn't like about Battle Creek is that here isn't much to do, "Nothing new ever" When asked what she wishes were different she wishes there as more to do. "Just more free things, but even just more restaurants, more entertainment, and more kids' places. My husband wants to move to Portage, but change is really hard for me. I don't know."

Candice’s Ego Network

Below is a picture of Candice’s ego network. The Key for the Diagram explains the meaning of the sizes, shapes and colors, etc. for example, Candice’s Mom is represented by a large red circle, meaning that her Mom is female, white and is one of the older people in Candice’s network. The blue line represents that her Mom lives inside of Battle Creek, the length of the line represents that they are in more frequent communication than the longer lines, and the thickness of the line represents the amount of time they have been in relationship. The arrows on both ends of the line means the relationship is reciprocal.

Figure 37 Candice’s Ego Network



Narrative to Support the Ego Network

Candice has a network of 10 people. Her network is diverse in terms of age, gender, race, and length of time in the relationship and geographic location. The age ranges from 30 to 70 with 4 of her relationships being 30-40 years old. There are 50% female and 50% male in her network and the 60% White, 30% Black/African American and 10% two or more races. The length of time of Candice’s relationships ranges as well about a third being 5-9 years; 1/3 being 15-19 years and a third being 30-34 years. Sixty percent of her network lives in Battle Creek and 80% of her network is family. The employment status of the alters is fairly varied ranging from

Business and Financial Operations to Educational Instruction to Health Care, Sales and Production Occupations with three people in that category and two people unemployed. Candice also had very regular contact with 80% of her network in daily or weekly communication. When asked if Candice felt like she was getting the support she needed from her Informal Network, she said “Looks like a lot on paper, but it’s not.” I really only have my mom and my sister. “I mean, it looks like a lot there, but it's really not. I mean, I feel like I don't have the support system that a lot of other people have. I literally have Zeb, who has his own mess of a life, which makes it hard to help me when he has his. My mom – I mean, Nana – is not a bad person by any means. She just works all the time, and she helps financially if I need her to, but she's not available like, "Hey, can you pick my kids up from school?"

Candice mentions that she has family that lives out of state which isn't very helpful. “I feel like that's not really a network”. When asked if she is getting the support she needs she says, “Oh, definitely not”. She wishes she had more family around. “It would make me less stressed if I had somebody who could happily take my kids to school for me. It's not like I'm saying, "Hey, can you take my kids to school?" Not because I want to sleep or be lazy. It's because I have to be at work.” Area's where Candice would like more support include, ““The things I mentioned – the transportation, house, job, and income. Just many more types of support. I don't have much, I feel like. Just financial support and emotional support. My mom is a good grandma, but she doesn't do well with kids screaming and crying, but they also know that they can get what they want, especially this one. She gets very irritated very quickly... Sometimes, I think it would be nice if I could put myself first, because I never do that. I don't want to say I'm bad at that, but I am. I never buy myself anything, except for coffee. But there are things that I need to do, and I don't. People are always saying, "You need this, and you need this.”

Candice's ideal situation would be:

...a better-paying job with better hours, so that I could be home more. I would want to make enough money to pay for the bills, but be home more than what I am. And then, our house is pretty small. We live in a two-story, four-bedroom home, but they are small bedrooms. And she [Aniyah] doesn't have a room. She actually sleeps between me and her sister. We are going to transition her into her sister's room, but still, the rooms are really small. I would need a bigger house. Probably better, more dependable transportation. I have a car, but every time I buy a car, it seems like I touch it, and it breaks. It just seems to keep happening. We have had times when we haven't had a car, and it's very stressful. We either try to make it until tax time. I usually make it until then, or a couple months before that, and then I buy another car every tax season. It's very frustrating. The car I have now, my dad gave me a month and a half ago. He came here from Oklahoma, and just gave it to me, because he knew I had been without a car for a few months, because the other one just fell apart. I thought the brakes were bad on that, but supposedly, it's the rear end, which was \$1,000 to have repaired. I'm back in the same level. I can drive it now, but I don't know how long it's going to last.” Candice's husband doesn't have a car so he gets rides to work. He also takes the bus sometimes. Candice says her mom is pretty helpful regarding transportation.

During the last interview, Candice shares that her husband is no longer working. They were taking a lot of money from him for child support. So Candice says, “He wants to try this

working from home type of stupid stuff, I guess. I don't feel like that's a thing. People work from home all over the world, but it's not playing the lottery or gaming, or whatever. Yeah. I understand. He doesn't want to go to work and have all his money taken for child support or insurance, or any of that, and I understand. Nobody wants to be broke. But you chose to have kids. You have to pay these things like 90 percent of America. So now, I'm not getting child support from him, which was really helping me.” Candice goes on to share, “There are times when I don't want to be with him, because our relationship is just stupid sometimes. But I just can't not have that help. And a lot of people don't understand it. My sister doesn't understand it, because she doesn't live it. But for now, it is what it is. It helps and it works”

Below is some additional description Candice provided about certain people in her network:

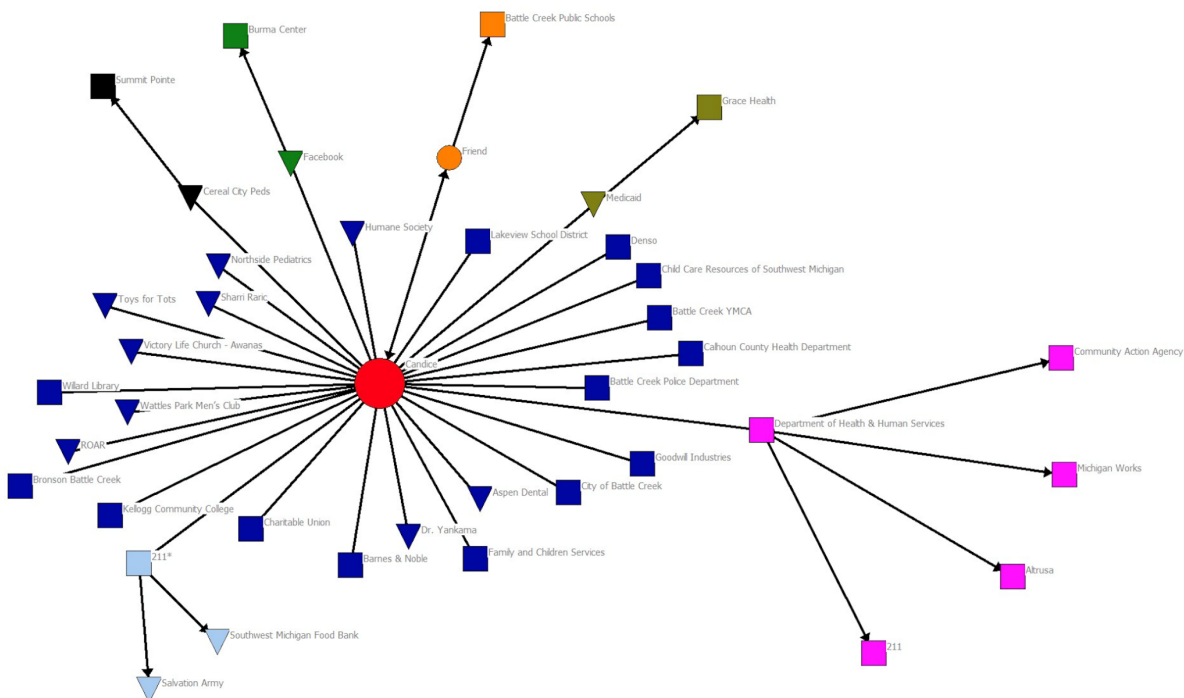
Husband	Her husband is Ali's Dad. They are married but separated and trying to work on things and "need to figure out how to get along before we can live together again" Works a "weird schedule". One weekend he has Ali. "Not really a feelings type of person"
Oldest Children's Dad	“Daughters are old enough that he can talk to them. 96% of the time he talks to them. It is very rare. They hardly ever see him. He is in and out of jail for child support or other things. He just comes around here and there. Sometimes they will see him when they are with their Nana.”
Dad	“Have a really good relationship. He is just not here.” He comes to Crystal when he was having a rough time. He's been divorced 9-10 times. Candice doesn't seem him in person often - last time was over three years ago. Not her biological dad. Crystal never met her biological dad. Her Mom and Dad married when she was around 2 or 3
Mom	Is the only one that helps with the kids. Candice rents her house and her Mom lives in the basement. Her Mom gets up in the morning and takes the kids to the bus to the bus. She also picks them up at the bus after 21st Century. Comes to Crystal for emotional support - like during divorce

Half Sister	This is the only sister she is in touch with. Has two sisters and a brother from her biological dad who she is not in touch with. Comes to Crystal for emotional support.
Older Children’s Dad’s Grandma	She helps to pick the kids up in an emergency.
Friend 1	They don’t talk as much as they used to. They have kids the same age. Candice was planning a trip on spring break with Friend1 and Friend 2 and their children.
Friend 2	Known since 2nd/3rd grade. They used to spend more time together before Candice had children. “She only has one child, and I have four children. And she teaches little kids all day, so she doesn't really like to be around this all the time.”
Uncle	Talk on Facebook messenger. During the time of the second interview passed away from Lung Cancer. "It's been a really rough year" "More of a day to day talking about how life is kind of thing"
Middle Child’s Dad	He has her son Wednesday's and every other weekend. According to Candice she talks to him "more than I'd like to "

Interactions with the Formal Network

Below is a different iteration of Candie’s ego network that continues to include only the individuals that referred her to an organization or opportunity as well as the organization that Candice identified during her interview as important to her as she is raising her children. The value of this visual is that it shows which people and organizations served as entry points for Candice. Some organizations opened many opportunities while others provided a connection to just one or two opportunities.

Figure 38 Candice’s Expanded Network



Narrative to Support Ego Network

Candice’s network shows that her entry points were primarily organizations, but a mix of organizations in the Formal Network and ones that are unique to Candice. She did have one friend that served as an entry point to Battle Creek Public Schools. The Department of Health and Human Services, one of the organizations in the Network Core, was Candice’s most significant entry point connecting her directly to four organizations, all in the Formal Network and indirectly to two additional networks outside of the Formal Network. Candice had a large number of organizations that she was directly connected to that did not refer her or connect her with additional opportunities. When asked to reflect on whether she was getting the support she needed Candice shared, “...every time I have asked for help, it doesn't seem like they give you these many options. It really doesn't. .. I feel like most of it's, "Okay, DHS is going to help you. If DHS isn't going to help you, CAA could. And if CAA can't, then that's it. That's done.”

Below is some additional description Candice provided about certain organizations in her network:

211	Called 211 or help for paying a bill or deposit on moving (not really helpful) Didn’t really get what I needed – “they just say call CAA or something like that” 211 referred her Food Bank and Salvation Army
Altrusa - Kids Campus	Daughters went there for a little bit when they were younger
Kellogg Community College	Took classes for a short period of time.
Barnes & Noble	Went to one of the reading events - Polar Express. Doesn’t go often. When kids were younger used to go there to look at the books or play with the train sets. “If we're going to get a book, it's usually at the library.”
Battle Creek Police Department	"I've been in trouble before"
Battle Creek Public Schools	Son goes to school there.

Battle Creek YMCA	"We've gone there over the years" - Worked out, indoor soccer, swimming in the pool.
Bronson Battle Creek	All of her children were born there.
Burma Center	Attended Zumba classes with daughters
Calhoun County Health Department	"Just that one time with the hearing test"
Charitable Union	Went a few times when older two were younger.
Child Care Resources	DHS referred her and provided a sheet with all of the daycares that participated with the subsidy
City of Battle Creek	Went to pay water bill
Community Action Agency	Ali and older two attended Head Start through community action. "Maybe have helped pay Utilities"
Denso	Husband used to work there. Crystal worked at Dense during the time Ali was born.
Department of Health & Human Services	Gets assistance, Medicaid, food stamps, cash assistance in the past. "some case workers are nice and some not" "I don't get a whole lot now because they act like I make too much money" Case worker she has now is extremely nice and helpful "I've never had one as nice as he is." According to Candice, DHS would typically take care of the things she needed and if they didn't they would refer to CA and they would typically help."
Family & Children Services	Older daughter went for counseling. Not a good experience. Just a few sessions. Switched because Candice wasn't happy
Goodwill Industries	Donated and looked/shopped a few times.
Grace Health	Used to go there, don't like the dental department. Was there for a couple of pregnancies.
Lakeview School District	Oldest two go to this district
Michigan Works	Went and applied for a job, create resume, faxed things. Someone on site that gave assistance. Sometimes would get a job as a result.
Summit Point	Daughter has gone there a few times.
Willard Library	Go there to get books and play, use the computers sometimes to print.

Appendix H – Comparison of Responses to Key Interview Questions

Table 15 Comparison of Responses to Key Interview Questions

	Emily	Jai'lysa	Hannah	Natalie	Mara	Jamila	Crystal
Getting Connected to Preschool	When asked to retell the story of how Emily got Cody connected with preschool she started by sharing, “this is a really weird story”. Cody and Derek were going to a home daycare provider from the time they were born. When the home daycare provider went on maternity leave, Emily was concerned she might not resume her business and that’s when Emily decided to look for a more structured and long-term option for the boys. She had heard of a daycare center and gave them a call only to find out that she had accidentally called Preschool Center 1 instead.	Jai’lysa began her search for daycare by looking online with the search term “daycare”. Malikai has been in daycare since he was 10 months old. Before he started at Preschool Center 1, Jai’lysa was working third shift so she had him during the day, and at night he would go to his Dad’s or he would go to Jai’lysa’s Moms. Jai’lysa shared that wasn’t a very good arrangement and she finally decided “I’ve got to do something” and that’s when she enrolled him in the Center. ...my mom recommended this facility to me. And when I came in, luckily, they had an	Hannah describes her experience getting connected to the preschool as positive, particularly because of a staff member in the baby room. “And still, to this day, I love her.” Hannah describes her as positive and taking pride in what she does. “... in childcare, you don’t get paid a lot. It’s not for everybody, especially in the baby room. People don’t have patience for it. And she is here day in and day out, and Ali is still attached to her. That was her person that she went to, and I don’t know if it’s because she’s an older lady. So maybe, it just resembled my grandma. My grandma took care of	When asked to retell the story of how Natalie got Ariel connected to preschool she shared, “I just searched schools, and there was a list of schools that I could put in order which one I would rather let her go to – number one, and then the next one...” Ariel got into Natalie’s first choice which was Preschool 2. (Natalie mostly gets information by searching Google on her phone. Natalie does not use Facebook.) This was her first choice because her mom lives right in the neighborhood. “I picked this place because I was planning on Lindy getting in, and they	Mara found out about the opportunity at Preschool Center 2 on the internet, the Head start Website. “Internet Of course, when you don’t know anything about the rules here about everything, I am always on Facebook. If it’s not Facebook, I take time to understand the age of kindergarten, first grade, and so on. After that, because kindergarten in Italy is free, and we start at two years old in Rio. It’s really different.” Mara shared mixed experiences at school for Jack: Jack hates to go to school, because at home, he wasn’t	Jamila has been connected to preschools for a long time. When her older daughter was six months old she found out about Head Start because her mom worked at one of the locations. Also, when Jamila was in high school she would volunteer in the classrooms.	Prior to going to preschool Candice stayed home with Aniyah. She enrolled her in Head Start because she wanted to get her into something with other kids. Candice got connected to the Head Start program because her older two girls were enrolled when they were younger. For Aniyah she heard an add on the radio – 103.3 FM. The radio add provided the website to go to. Her process for enrolling was an online application and then they contacted her for information such as check stubs and to fill out the paperwork. The process was a positive experience

	<p>Once Emily visited Preschool Center 1 she “ended up loving it” and decided not to pursue the original center she thought she was contacting. She likes the fact that it is close to her home and that Derek, who is in kindergarten, can go there in the summer for care.</p> <p>The transition from a home daycare to the Preschool Center 1 was financially a change for Emily. She was receiving the Department of Health and Human Services Childcare Subsidy support which was covering the home daycare, but she had to pay an additional \$50 per week, or about \$200 per month for Cody to attend. Emily reflects positively, however, on the transition, “I love all the girls here. . . . They are accredited here with NAEYC Accreditation, and then, obviously, through the state, licensed. . . I think</p>	<p>opening for him, so it wasn't too hard to get him in. But back then, I wasn't really making good money, so I was like, "But how am I going to pay for it? Because daycare here is \$178 a week." And . . . , the director back then, referred me to DHS, and I just had some paperwork to fill out, and I gave it to them. And they set me up for daycare through here. And then, I also had a really good caseworker at the time, and she set me up with food stamps. I already had Medicaid, so they set that up for him as well. But it was pretty easy getting him in here. It was the luck of the draw, honestly. I came in, and [the director] was like, "I have never seen anyone get approved that fast for daycare.”</p> <p>Once Malikai got to preschool age, Jai'lysa had to apply again because the preschool portion is different from the</p>	<p>her for a while, so she went to her, and she was fine. I don't know. But it was an easy transition. It helped me.” It was also a good experience for Hannah because she worked there. She knew the people and could peek in or go in there any time to check in. When Hanna first applied, Ali was placed on a waiting list. But within two months she had a spot. Hannah likes the preschool because she feels like it is a safe place. They check ID's, have passcodes.</p>	<p>both can go at the same time. I would like to start Lindy early, because she is kind of shy, so that's why I chose this place. It was easy. I just filled out the application, they called me, and I had an orientation, and I came and filled out that information.” During our first interview Lindy was denied because according to Natalie they reserve slots mostly for working parents. “I mean, I can understand that there are a lot of children her age that were trying to get in, but the ones that come first are of the working parents. Right before our final interview Natalie's younger daughter turned three which made her eligible to start preschool as well. She was nervous at the start. Natalie describes her as shy. “In the morning, she's always nervous, but when I pick her up, she plays with teachers. They said that it just takes her a little bit of time.”</p>	<p>listening. He still is not listening. He was doing crazy thing, but now he's a little bit better. He tries to put energy here in the school. He cries only for coming home. I completed the form a little bit on the internet, and they contacted me. I think, "Oh my god." I completed the form for the next year – four years old – and they contacted me four days after, and said, "If you want, we have space for this year, too. At that time, he wasn't potty trained. Then I did everything in four days before he started. But I was happy that I had him all prepared, and here we are.</p>		<p>and Candice doesn't believe anything could have made it better.</p> <p>Candice tries to do the activities that the school has available. The other night they want to a Pete the Cat Party. “I always try to do the free activities I see on Facebook” They do a Trunk or Treat activity in the fall and a party downtown in the summer time. When Candice goes on Facebook to find activities she typically just sees that someone has created an event.</p>
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	<p>just going from a home daycare to a center, where it's like a real school, and they're going to be learning and sitting at desks." Emily had a very positive experience with a particular teacher and classroom within the center and is hoping that Cody will have the same experience; however, Cody is in a different classroom because Emily now qualifies for state-funded preschool (GSRP - the Great Start Readiness Program) and she did not with Derek.</p> <p>I like the GSRP room, as far as it being government-regulated, and they have to follow specific standardized testing. So, I guess we will have to wait and see if it works out, but I definitely think they follow the same type of thing in here. ...So, I think just being in a center allows more socialization, which is really important</p>	<p>daycare portion of the organization. While this was a positive experience for, Jai'lysa, she mentioned that, "I have been dreading to have another kid. I want another kid, but I'm like, "I don't want to go through that process again." Because the first time, I was lucky enough to get all that support, but what if this time, I go down there, and I get another caseworker that's not so helpful?"</p>		<p>Ariel goes half days. Of her experience getting acclimated to school, Natalie explains, "...She bugged me all the time to go to school, but I was so nervous, and I just didn't sign her up. In that whole year, she asked me, so I knew I was going to sign her up this year. But of course, the first and second time we bring her, she wanted to come back home. I'm like, "Well, you've been asking."</p> <p>Natalie shared that she had a big decision coming up to make for Ariel regarding Kindergarten. She is thinking about sending her to the school where her nieces go. When asked how she might go about making that decision, Natalie shared that she plans to visit. This is another area Natalie shared some nervousness about, "You never know someone can act really nice and treat your child</p>			
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	for kindergarten. So, I think having him there was my biggest thing. When people would ask me, 'Before your kid goes to kindergarten, what do you think?' - they need to be in preschool. We need to put him in some kind of standardized preschool, where there are a bunch of kids, so they can learn what it's like to be in a school.			differently". Natalie decided to send her here to Preschool 2 because they allow parents to come into the classroom and you can stay the whole time if you want.			
Reflections on Experience as a Parent	<p>When asked to reflect on what she found rewarding, challenging and/or surprising as a parent, Emily shared:</p> <p>Rewarding, I would definitely say just the joy that these two kids look to me for everything, like I'm their whole world, being a single parent. It's rewarding, definitely in that. Just being able to teach them everything they know, like everything that they are comes from me. So, that's cool.</p>	<p>When asked to reflect on what she found rewarding, challenging and/or surprising as a parent, Jai'lysa shared:</p> <p>What I like about being a parent is it makes me feel good to know that I am raising a little person. I can't really explain it. It just feels good to know that I'm raising him. He's such a good kid, and everywhere we go, people are like, "Oh, he's so well-behaved." And it just makes me feel good. I'm the one that's teaching him to be this way, and</p>	<p>When asked to reflect on what she found rewarding, challenging and/or surprising as a parent, Hannah shared:</p> <p>I had to grow up really fast. I was young. ... So, I was living at home, and I found out [she was pregnant], when I was 21, and I had to grow up. It was time to find my own place and take care of myself, and prepare. ... Well, I was living at my stepdad's house, so I knew that that wasn't an environment I wanted to be in anyway, with a small child. He has a lot of</p>	<p>When asked what Natalie has found to be rewarding, challenging and/or surprising as a parent she says that Ariel has helped her be more patient. And it's rewarding because, "she loves me very much". Natalie mentions getting clothes for her girls as a need. "Well, she has grown a lot in a year, so every other week, it seems her pants are not really fitting her. I have to get her some clothes, because mostly, she has a ton of toys and stuff like that." Other challenges Natalie</p>	<p>Reflections on Experience as a Parent</p> <p>When asked what she sees as the rewards of being a parent, Mara responded:</p> <p>Well, when I was young, I was a bad girl, but I always wanted kids, because I had fun. And you can have fun during the rest of your life. But you wake up the next day, and then you have nothing. You had fun, and now, I go to bed late, because my time is from 9:00 am to midnight.</p>	<p>Jamila shared that she gets joy from being a parent, "Just when he masters certain skills that I try to teach him, like when he starts doing the things himself, I just feel like I'm doing a good job."</p> <p>A challenge she is facing as a parent has been figuring out how to support Karl with some of the concerns she has regarding his speech. She shared that she mentioned it to his doctor and they referred Karl to get his hearing tested. Once they</p>	<p>Candice has found the "love" to be rewarding about being a parent. As she explains further Candice shares that even though parenting can be frustrating, she could not imagine not having her children. When asked what she has found interesting about being a parent Candice responded "It's hard". She explains that she is a "softie" and hates doing the discipline even though she knows she has to. "I hate being the bad guy. And it's really hard to find that balance,</p>

	<p>Hard, I would say keeping them active, and I guess making sure that they're in some kind of sport, or doing something all the time. I think nowadays, with technology, it's easy to just come home and play on your iPads, or watch TV, or whatever, but making sure that they're doing activities.</p> <p>An unexpected challenge of being a parent are the expenses. Emily shared that diapers and wipes were a big expense and that both of her boys were potty-trained before their second birthdays:</p> <p>I know everyone says that kids are so expensive, but you don't think about it until you get into it, especially having two. One is enough, but two kids playing soccer, two kids doing swimming... But again, the nice thing about having two boys is hand-me-downs, and all those things, even</p>	<p>it just makes me feel good that I'm being a good mom, and I'm able to provide for him... Challenging... Patience. I think that's probably my biggest thing that I've struggled with, being a parent. I do suffer from mild anxiety, so sometimes, I get a little overwhelmed, but he doesn't know that I have anxiety. He doesn't know that I get frustrated easily. So, I think I have been doing good at not showing him that I get frustrated, but I do get really frustrated and anxious sometimes. And he's just like, "Mom! Mom! Mom! Mom!" And I'm like, "Oh, I can't take it!" So, that's just been challenging for me. But it's been four years now, so I rarely have days like that, where I just go in my room, and just say, "Mom, can you come get him?" But that's pretty much the most challenging thing. That's</p>	<p>animals, so I'm allergic, and she's allergic. So, I just knew that I needed to save. I had nine months, so that was when I was working at a daycare in Portage, when I was pregnant. I picked up as many hours and overtime, and anything I could. I was babysitting outside of work. And I just saved, saved, saved. And I found a place, and I just moved.</p> <p>Hannah struggled with depression after Ali was born. "...I had really deep post-partum depression, and I had no support. I was on three antidepressants, and obviously, I was at home taking care of her, because I was on maternity leave, and I just was blue. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I thought this was just like the world was going to end. 'Oh my gosh! I'm a single mom! I've failed.' That type of thing. I almost felt like I was ashamed to reach out to anybody. I didn't</p>	<p>mentions include making sure she is giving her children what they need. "I want her to have everything, but I only get a certain amount of income a month. That's challenging."</p> <p>Natalie is also worried or nervous about the safety of her children. "The only thing I have felt is how nervous I was to bring her into places of people I don't know – just how this world is. I can't trust anyone, really. And yeah, I know she would tell me if someone tried to hurt her or anything, but that is the main thing I am nervous about." Natalie is also concerned about someday when Ariel gets a boyfriend. "Well, she's not of age yet, but I would be concerned about her having a boyfriend. That's where I would get worried."</p> <p>When Natalie was asked what it would look like for her to feel supported as a</p>	<p>And then, I try to go to bed early, but I know it's late. When you wake up, you have your kids. You are doing something for the kids. You stand up from the bed for your kids. They make me crazy. They are my little devils. But without them, it's not the same. Maybe I can have fun for a couple of days, but after that, you don't have anything else. You don't have a schedule in your life. Maybe a career, but it's not the same."</p> <p>"Without them, it is not life for me."</p> <p>When asked about the challenges of parenthood: Mara responded:</p> <p>Alex. Of course, my life changed when I had him. If he were not disabled, maybe it wouldn't be the same. It was my first pregnancy that was a disaster. My first kid was a disaster. And really, when you are a first-time</p>	<p>ruled that out they decided to start speech therapy. Jamila shared, "Right now, his speech is challenging. He's not really bad when he's talking, but with a lot of his words, you can't really understand. We actually just started taking him to speech therapy Monday. We are going to do a little bit more of that." Jamila shared she wished she had "gotten to it a little sooner... I have always had doubts. I contradicted myself, like, "No, it's not really a big deal. It will come when it comes. Every child is different." But that is what goes through my mind a lot with him."</p> <p>When asked what was unexpected for her as a parent she said, "It's always a smack in the face about how much time I actually have on my hands before</p>	<p>because I know I don't want them to run all over me, but I also don't want them to hate me. Sometimes, it's never enough. I have some very different kids. My oldest is very materialistic. You don't love her if you don't spend thousands of dollars on her. That's very hard for me, so I really struggled with her in not understanding what I do for her. But then, you have her sister, who is only 17 months younger than her, and who's totally opposite. She knows, for the most part, what I do for her. It's hard trying to find that balance between them. And then, the younger ones really don't care." Candice also shared, "I compare myself to other parents sometimes, but sometimes I'm like, "I don't know how they're so calm, or how they don't yell."</p> <p>When asked where she goes for support</p>
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	<p>with their Halloween costumes. Cody said he wanted to be a Power Ranger this year. Derek was a Power Ranger last year. So, I said, 'Yeah, you could totally be a Power Ranger! I don't want to spend \$30 on a costume! That's awesome!' And like I said, they're so close, so he wants to be like his brother. He wants to do similar things.</p>	<p>patience I had to learn.</p> <p>Jai'lysa has been surprised at "how fast they grow." She didn't expect that she would need to buy new clothes for Malikai quite so often – every 3-6 months. The amount of sacrifice was another area that surprised, Jai'lysa. "I knew that I was going to have to sacrifice a lot, like a lot of free time...I knew what to expect just from my mom and other people, but really, just how much money I have to spend. I thought it was just enrolling your kids in daycare, and that was it. Or enroll your kids in school, and that was it. It was so much I had to do just to get into daycare, so much I had to do just to get him to the doctor, or get him a good doctor</p>	<p>want anybody to be disappointed. So I just took my medicine and put on a happy face. And then, finally, it got to a point where people noticed, and I finally blew up, and said, "It's bad." They wanted me to do therapy. I tried it, and I felt like I was paying a stranger to talk to. I was like, "This is not for me." It wasn't for me. But really, all they wanted to do was just prescribe more medicine. I'm not a big pill-taker, so me just being on the antidepressants that I was on, it was already a lot." Hannah said going back to work helped her feel more normal and get back into a normal routine so she wasn't just home alone. Hannah has found the expenses of being a parent challenging. "...especially being a single mom with one income. And I don't get a lot of help from the state. It's not that I expect a lot of help, but I get frustrated, because I</p>	<p>parent she said, "Well, I do get food stamps and medical for the girls. My income is social security and disability, so before I had the girls, I got Medicaid and food stamps for myself. After they were born, they make it where they force you to put the father on child support, or they don't help you. They'll help the kids, but they won't help you, so now I'm paying for medical, and I really don't get that much income. Now I'm paying for medical, and I don't get food stamps. It's just for the girls. I don't think they should force you to put the father on child support. He helps out with them, and when they're with him, he provides for them, and they love their dad very much. He gets minimum wage, so that would put a strain on him and them – him being stressed, and their relationship, and stuff like that."</p>	<p>mom, you want a healthy baby, the perfect pregnancy, and mine wasn't that. Yeah, he taught me a lot. He taught me patience. I don't have it anymore, but with him, I sat there for hours to read a book. I sat there for hours to sing a song. Then, it's difficult. And now, after the third kid, you can see the difference. For the first kids, you watch the pacifier go on the floor. You always have wipes or diapers. Jack grew up in the jungle. The pacifier on the floor, okay. I put in my mouth, I put in his mouth. Wipes? Yeah, when I remember. It's really this. The third kid may have grown up by him or herself, or maybe you are more confident in them, or in yourself, and you know that they can meet it, not like your first kid. But I am happy.</p> <p>Mara's unexpected parenting experiences follow:</p>	<p>babies. Before I had my first child, I was like, 'Oh my goodness, I have no time on my hands... I have so much time to myself.' And then, I thought that was bad. And then I had my second daughter, and I was thinking, "Oh my goodness, what was I thinking? I have no time to myself!" And then, I had Karl, and I was like, "What was I thinking?" I get all these smacks in the face."</p> <p>When asked with would help her achieve the ideal situation as a parent, Jamila shared she wished she had done things differently regarding school. Jamila is currently working and going to school for a degree in Human Services. "If I would have handled school just a few years earlier, I would not be spreading myself so thin. It's</p>	<p>Candice shares that she is married and talks to her husband a lot. "But he is a guy, so it's hard for him to understand, plus he is not the older two or [her son's] dad; he's Aniyah's dad. Sometimes, I think that makes it hard for him to understand. Plus, he came from a poor family. His family was lower income. There were five of them – six at one time. He had a brother that passed away. He knows what it is like to not have things."</p>
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			<p>feel like the people that need it the most are the ones that don't get it. And then, the ones that don't really need it get all of it. I make too much, so I get cut off. So, I guess I have to not work to be able to get help. So, it's either work, and I don't have food, and I just pay my bills, or I work, and I pay my bills, and I hardly get help.” Hannah shared that, she gets very little food assistance, but Ali’s preschool is state funded which helps; however, if she were to attend before or after care or go on Friday Hannah would have to pay out of pocket Hannah’s was also surprised by the cost of diapers and formula. Ali is lactose intolerant and as a result had to use formula that was expensive. “...she would go through it crazy, because they're not bigger cans. They're small cans, but they're expensive. And she would go through them like crazy. So,</p>		<p>You don't have a life. I had a good life... I had a lot of friends. I had a normal life. You go out for you. Now, I don't have friends. I go out... When I go out, I do grocery shopping, gas, and doctor, only for the kids. I don't have a life. Sometimes I miss it a lot. But other times, I don't have time to miss it, and then, yes, this is the only little thing.</p> <p>When Mara describes how she envisioned herself as a parent she explains:</p> <p>Better. I never thought I was good in that situation. I think I can always be better. I don't have enough patience now. I don't pass enough time with my kids.” When asked to clarify what she meant by ‘not passing enough time with the kids, Mara explains, “Well, because of doctor appointments, and</p>	<p>not really anything with any more services I would need, I guess, but it's more of something that I should have been doing differently, I guess.”</p>	
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			<p>that was a major expense in not having a second income.”</p> <p>Hannah’s main concern for Ali is about her safety. . . . just being in the world, you see all these horrific things on the news, and shootings in elementary schools, and it just scares me to let her out of my sight. You just never know who’s going to walk into a building. I don’t know. It just freaks me out. There are so many crazy people. And it’s not even crazy people; it’s just that they’re not seeking the help that they probably need. Because mental illness is real, and I don’t think people think that. A lot of people say, “It’s just in your head.” And it’s not. It’s real. And people don’t get help, and so they just take it out on innocent people. It just freaks me out. That’s why I’m like, “I don’t really know where I’m going to put her in school. I might want homeschool her, and</p>		<p>because the girl starts cheerleading, then I am so busy, that when I have time, I like to lay on the couch and not do anything. And this is wrong, because before, I was reading books, I was doing activities, and I was doing a lot. Now, I don’t have that magic fairy tale, and I’m tired. Maybe now, because she’s going to school too, I start to have more energy, but when they come home, it’s like I take him home. After ten minutes, I have the other two, everything is better, and then you feel, “Oh my god, they have to go back into school.” And then you don’t want to spend time with them, then I put them outside in the backyard to play. They love it anyway, but I know I can be better. If there’s something I like it, there’s a reason, because this is me. I continue to say I can be better at everything.” “ I</p>	
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			not work. I don't know.		can sing songs. Maybe this is good. They continue to want the lullaby during the night, and this is the only good thing I continue to do. I know they are big enough, and they don't need it, but they continue to it.		
Aspirations for child	<p>Emily is hoping that Cody will have the same positive experience in pre-K that Derek had and that he will like school just as much:</p> <p>I hope, with Cody, that he gets to that same level of just writing, colors, and shapes, and the whole thing. And he needs to work on his speech, so speech will definitely be a thing when he gets into kindergarten, or whenever they start that...I hope that he likes school, and that he does well. I can already see from my five-year-old that he loves kindergarten, so I think he'll do well. I just hope that Cody does the same, because there are a lot of differences.</p>	<p>Jai-lysa:</p> <p>When I think about his future, he's such a big kid right now. Everyone thinks he's six, and his doctor says he's going to be super tall, super big. So, he's going to be pretty tall. He loves sports. He loves soccer, and he loves football. I wasn't able to get him into sports this summer, but next summer, I'm hoping to get him into sports. So hopefully, when he grows up, he can get into sports and get scholarships, and just be successful. I don't care what he wants to be when he gets older. I don't care what he wants to do. I'll support it, as long as he's doing something that he enjoys doing. And</p>	<p>Hannah shared she is hoping that Ali has a different experience than what she has had. "Well, I hope she's not in Battle Creek, Michigan, for one. I hope she's not 21 and pregnant like I was. And if she is, I hope she's at least with a worthy person that will help her, because I don't want her to struggle like I did. I'm definitely going to have talks with her for sure, because I don't want her to struggle like I did. It's only going to get harder as the generations go on."</p>	<p>Regarding her aspirations for Ariel, Natalie shares, "I would hope that she's a respectful lady that gets an education, and goes for what she wants to do, that she loves to do, not something that she has to do."</p>		<p>When asked what her aspirations are for Karl, "I just want him to have a bright future, really. I just want him to be successful, be able to handle himself in different situations, keep him cultured"</p>	<p>Candice's aspirations for Aniyah are for her to be strong. "I want her to be strong, and I want her to be independent, basically." Candice doesn't have concerns for Aniyah like struggling in school. She does worry about her being a little "wild". Candice explains she was worried about how she would do in preschool as a result of this.</p>

		<p>with sports, I know he loves sports, so I want to get him in now, so he can get those scholarships.</p> <p>Jai'lysa mentioned that she didn't enroll Malikai in sports last summer because she was busy working on her degree. "I was getting my Bachelor's, and for my job, it was a couple of classes that I had to take that interfered with my work schedule, so the only schedule I could come up with them was working a split schedule. I would go in from 8:00 to noon, and then leave and go to class, and then come back from 4:00 to 8:00. And then, also, for me to get my degree, I had to do an internship, so that took up a lot of my time as well. I had to take four classes, just to finish up this last semester. I can't put him into sports, because his dad is working second shift, so he won't be able to be there. I</p>					
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		<p>didn't want to depend on other people to take him, so I'm just like, "Okay, next year, definitely I'll put him in."</p> <p>In addition to aspirations for Malikai, Jai'lysa also shared some concerns. She is concerned about his speech: "His speech isn't as clear as a lot of the four-year-olds in his class, but he's doing a lot better. Each month, his speech gets better." She did talk to the doctor but the doctor said that he's fine and some kids are just a little behind. Jai'lysa also shared that Malikai is a little emotional sometimes. He exaggerates his emotions sometimes, like when someone takes something from him, he gets really upset I can't even really explain it. He can get really angry. Not angry to the point where he'll hit someone, but he'll get angry and start crying and get mad. He just gets</p>					
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		emotional sometimes. But it's not really a concern of mine, like when I think, "Oh, I'm worried that he'll hit someone today." Just for the future, I'm trying to get him out of being so sensitive and emotional to where he takes everything so personal and harsh.					
Living in Battle Creek	Emily has lived in Battle Creek her whole life. Her parents now live in Colon in the summers and Florida in the winters. According to Emily, "not a whole lot" has kept her in Battle Creek, but she does like the school district that Derek attends. She does not live in the district and had to use school of choice to enroll her son. She characterized her experience with enrollment as a "mess." She explained that they signed up in May, but there were too many students interested in the limited spaces, so there was a lottery. They didn't find out	Jai'lysa has lived in Battle Creek since 2002. Her father was in the military so she moved around a lot. Prior to Battle Creek Jai'lysa and her parents lived in Jackson, Michigan. Once her parents got divorced she moved to Battle Creek because her grandma and other family members live here. Jai'lysa does like the size of Battle Creek. "It's small. Everyone knows everybody, which can be a pro or a con, but I look at it more of as a pro, because I feel comfortable going to certain places, because I know everybody, or pretty much everybody."	During the first interview Hannah shared that she was considering moving to Arizona. She grew up in Battle Creek, but lived in Arizona in 2011 and nannied for her stepsister who had a baby. She loved it there but was homesick. "I didn't have a car. I just sold everything I had, and I went on a limb and left. And I wouldn't take it back, because I learned a lot, and I got to leave for a little while. But I just came back, and then, now that I have my own kid, I think there is so much more to offer out there. It's bigger. Everywhere is going to have unsafe places and crazies, but maybe in bigger	Natalie has lived in Battle Creek her whole life. When asked what has kept her in Battle Creek Natalie shared that she never really thought about moving. Most of her family is here. Natalie has three brothers, one sister, and two half-sisters, and another half-brother. And I've got nieces and nephews, too. When asked what she likes about Battle Creek she says, "nothing really...If there is any one thing that pops into my mind, it's just that my family is here. I guess that probably now that Ariel is in school, there are different activities that I can be	Mara likes that Battle Creek is little and quiet She also likes that is has lots of green and several parks. What she doesn't like is that there isn't much to do here. Mara responded: What I don't like is that there is no life. There is nothing here. Not only for the kids, but in general. Maybe it's because it's really different from Italy, but there are not a lot of coffee shops. You can't sit down outside and enjoy a coffee with your friends. Now, it's everything in the car. You can stop to take a coffee in the car. You can stop at the pharmacy to take your medicine	Candice has lived in Battle Creek since she was 15 years old. Her mom moved for a job at the local hospital. Candice moved away once to Missouri to live near her sister but only stayed for four months. "I could not stay. I think I have just been here, so it's what I know." Candice says what keeps her in Battle Creek is family and a few friends. Her mom is here, her kids dad's mom is here and she is a huge part of their life. What Candice doesn't like about Battle Creek is that here isn't much to do, "Nothing new ever" When asked	

	<p>that Derek was able to enroll until the Friday before school started. When asked if there was anyone who was helpful in navigating the school choice process, Emily shared it was more family like her aunt who was a school teacher her whole life. Also, Emily's second cousin is a bus driver for the district and also supported that choice. Elizabeth's family has been supportive of her selection to send Cody and Derek to the district because that was where they all went to school and that is where their children go. Her brother and sister-in-law live in the district and her children could always ride the bus home to their house. Cody is getting ready to head to kindergarten next year, and according to Emily getting him enrolled was the most important decision she has made recently. He will be attending the</p>	<p>She also likes the fact that Malikai will know many people in the area as he grows up which makes her feel comfortable. "What's kept me here so long, is that I'm familiar with it."</p> <p>Despite the comfort of familiarity, Jai'lysa has considered leaving the community.</p> <p>Well, honestly, I have been thinking about moving out of Battle Creek, just because of the lack of resources. I was thinking about moving to Kalamazoo, because I have seen that they have the Kalamazoo Promise [a college scholarship program]. I thought that was really nice, and I haven't seen anything like that here. And then, as far as the beginning, when I had the caseworker, she was really helpful. And then, after that, each caseworker I got was just nasty and rude to me. And I'm like, "How can I move forward in</p>	<p>cities. I don't know. I feel like Battle Creek is too small of a city to have such tragic things happen."</p> <p>Moving to Arizona also came up when Hannah was sharing her thoughts about kindergarten for Ali, "I'm not too fond of the area, just with the shootings and the safety, and I don't know if I'm comfortable with sending her somewhere. She's been here her whole life. So, after this, I don't really know what I'll do."</p> <p>By the third interview Hannah had decided to move to Arizona along with her Mom and Step Dad. Hannah shared that deciding to move was the most important decision she's made recently. "... It will be finding all the services that I have now in Michigan, to finding those services in Arizona. I can't do anything until I'm there, but I guess I have it all researched and saved. The place is</p>	<p>involved in, that I haven't been involved in before."</p> <p>When asked what she would change about her city, Natalie responded, "There are not good people everywhere. I would look for nicer people, nicer neighborhoods, and less violence. I wish people would be more respectful. That's the same with the people being nicer."</p>	<p>in the car. You can stop at the bank in the car. You are not going to have a relationship in the car. This is wrong. I think all this helping you to stay in the car is wrong. I enjoy a walk with the stroller, or with the kids on the bicycle. We love it. But here, it's different. I went to this store by foot in Italy. Here, we say, "Let's take the car. Why not?" It's weird. it's really weird."</p>		<p>what she wishes were different she wishes there as more to do. "Just more free things, but even just more restaurants, more entertainment, and more kids' places. My husband wants to move to Portage, but change is really hard for me. I don't know."</p>
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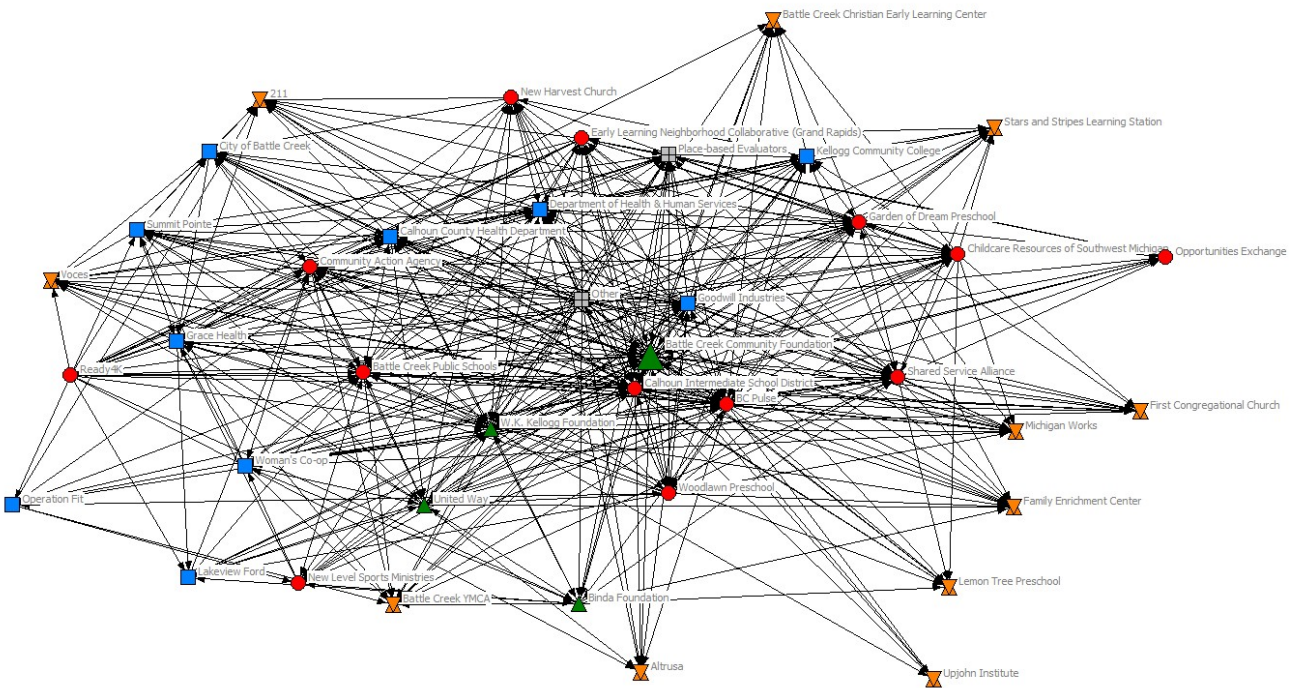
	<p>same school as his older brother.</p> <p>Emily has concerns about the Battle Creek community in general. When asked what she wishes were different about Battle Creek:</p> <p>I guess just the community atmosphere... I don't know. We went to the park last night. So, in the park that's right by my house, they have football practice. Yeah. They have football practice there, and there's a little park, so it's just within walking distance. We go there all the time. And so, there are a whole bunch of parents watching their kids do football, or whatever. I don't know. It's just they are blaring horrible, horrible, obscene music, and just not respecting kids. They're throwing bottles at our car, and there are little kids that my kids are playing with that are swearing, and I'm like, 'Oh my</p>	<p>this community when the people who are supposed to assist the community are just so rude?" It was just really hard to keep him here, and with everything going on over there... I'm kind of worried about if I do stay here in Battle Creek, in this community, would he be able to excel as easy as other cities that offer more support for their students.</p> <p>This seems to be on Jai'lysa's mind as she shared that the most important decision she has made recently is getting Malikai ready for kindergarten. Jai'lysa signed him up for a new academy and that was important because she doesn't live in the district. Jai'lysa's mom has been encouraging her in the process.</p> <p>When asked what would make Battle Creek a better place to live, Jai'lysa shared that more opportunities in the</p>	<p>paid for, reserved and waiting, so on June 1st, we are leaving. It was tough, but I think it's what's best, given circumstances, and her graduating from preschool, and getting ready for kindergarten. I don't want to send her to school here. And job-wise, there are more opportunities out there in Arizona, so it's just time to shut the book here and move on.” Hannah is moving by her sister whom she nannied for years ago. She is planning on spending a lot of time with them. Her step sister has two children – a six-year-old and a two-year-old. Hannah shared that Ali was part of the decision making “in a way” “...I just asked how she would feel if we up and moved away from where we have been since she was a baby. And she's all for it. She wants to be near her cousins, so she's excited.” They are all going to live in the same apartment complex. She hasn't told her grandparents</p>				
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	<p>gosh! You're five!' Just not good behaviors by all. And then, we went to go leave, and the guy in the one car was like, 'Hey, white girl!' ...I don't like my kids being around that kind of horrible noise.</p> <p>When asked what would make Battle Creek a better place, Emily said, "I feel like they do a lot. That's the problem. I feel like Battle Creek, as a whole, has so many resources, and people just don't take the time to utilize them".</p>	<p>community would make it a better place to live. "I can't even name one thing that I would want to see done, but I just think more for the community, and for the generations coming up, that we should give them more opportunities and more scholarships, and give them things that they can work towards. I know they have got to be out there, but they're not really broadcast anywhere for people to find out about them. Any opportunity that I had, or that I found, I had to go out looking for it. So, I just wish it was more broadcast." When Jai'lysa used the phrase, "I wish it would more broadcast" she clarified by saying she wished more information about opportunities was shared on social media, recommending that maybe there be a community page, or flyers on social media.</p>	<p>yet, "I'm waiting for the right time to tell them, because right now, they're still early, so I don't want to tell them too early for them to feel like I'm taking them away from her. I want them to enjoy time." Hannah is concerned about being able to make it financially but thinks she will be fine.</p> <p>Hannah shared that she didn't have support in making this important decision. "It was just me. I went back and forth for a while. I mean, I was really hesitant. When I called, it was January that I called and told them, "Hey, I want to put a deposit down." I applied for the apartment. I didn't know if I could get it or not. And then I got approved, and I was like, "Oh my gosh! I didn't know I was going to get approved. And I went from there."</p>				
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Appendix I: Ego Networks of Key Organizations

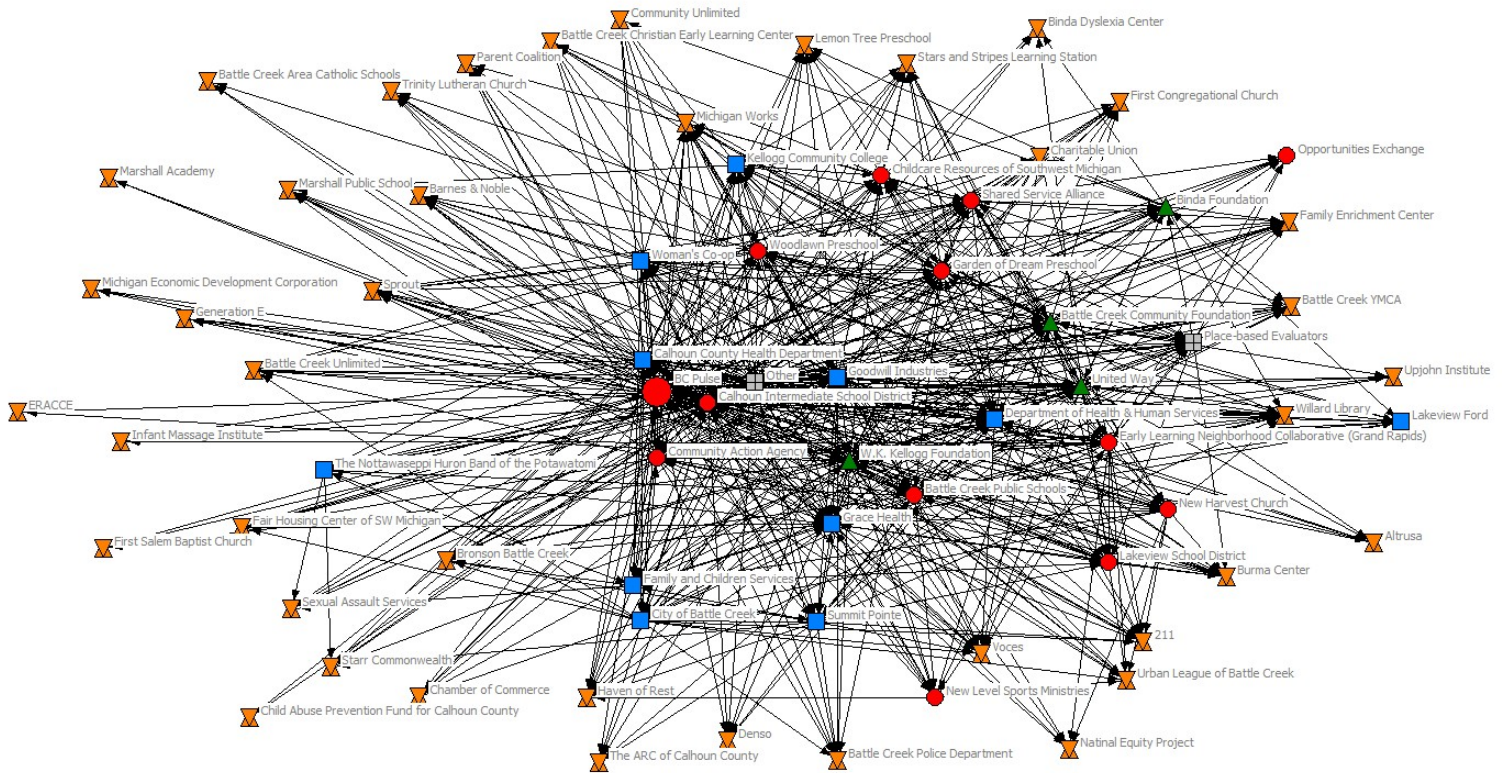
Ego networks were created for the core cluster organizations in the network including: the Calhoun Intermediate School District, Calhoun County Health Department, BC Pulse, Goodwill Industries, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Grace Health, Battle Creek Public Schools, Battle Creek Community Foundation, Community Action Agency, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Figure 39 Ego-network of Battle Creek Community Foundation



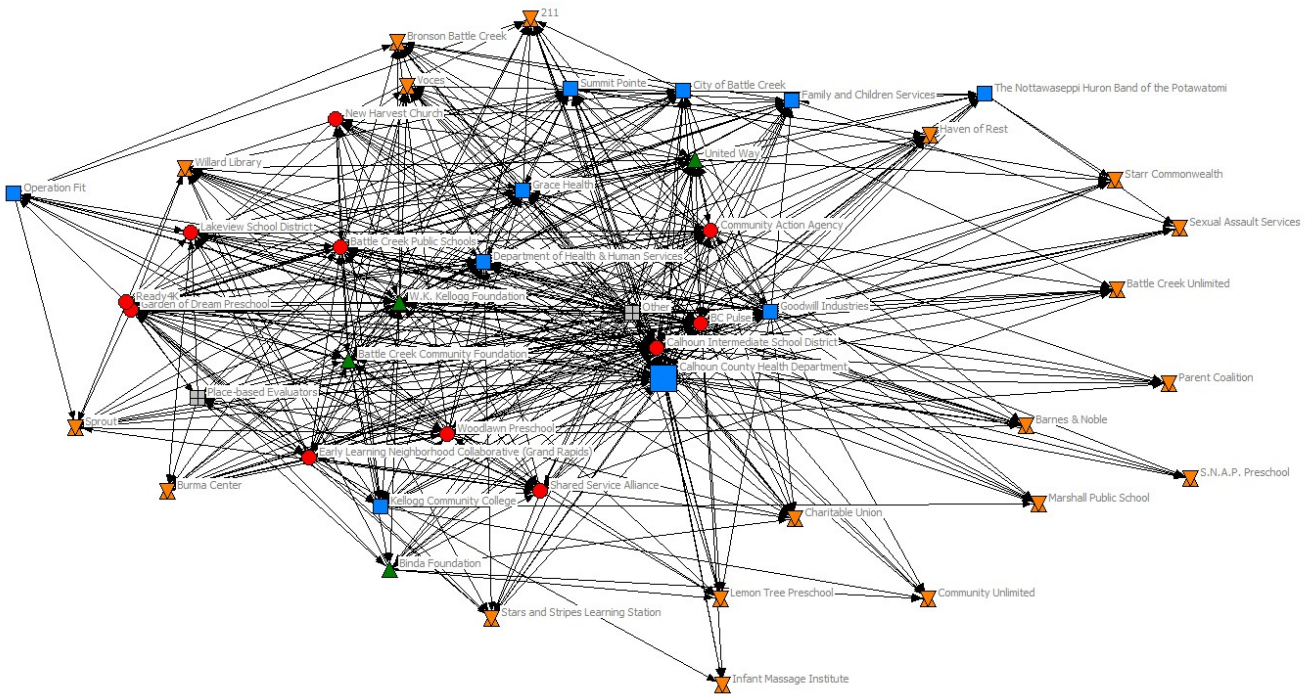
- Note.1. Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Up Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: others.
2. The bigger symbol in this diagram is the focal node in the ego-network.
3. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of interventions.

Figure 40 Ego-network of BC Pulse



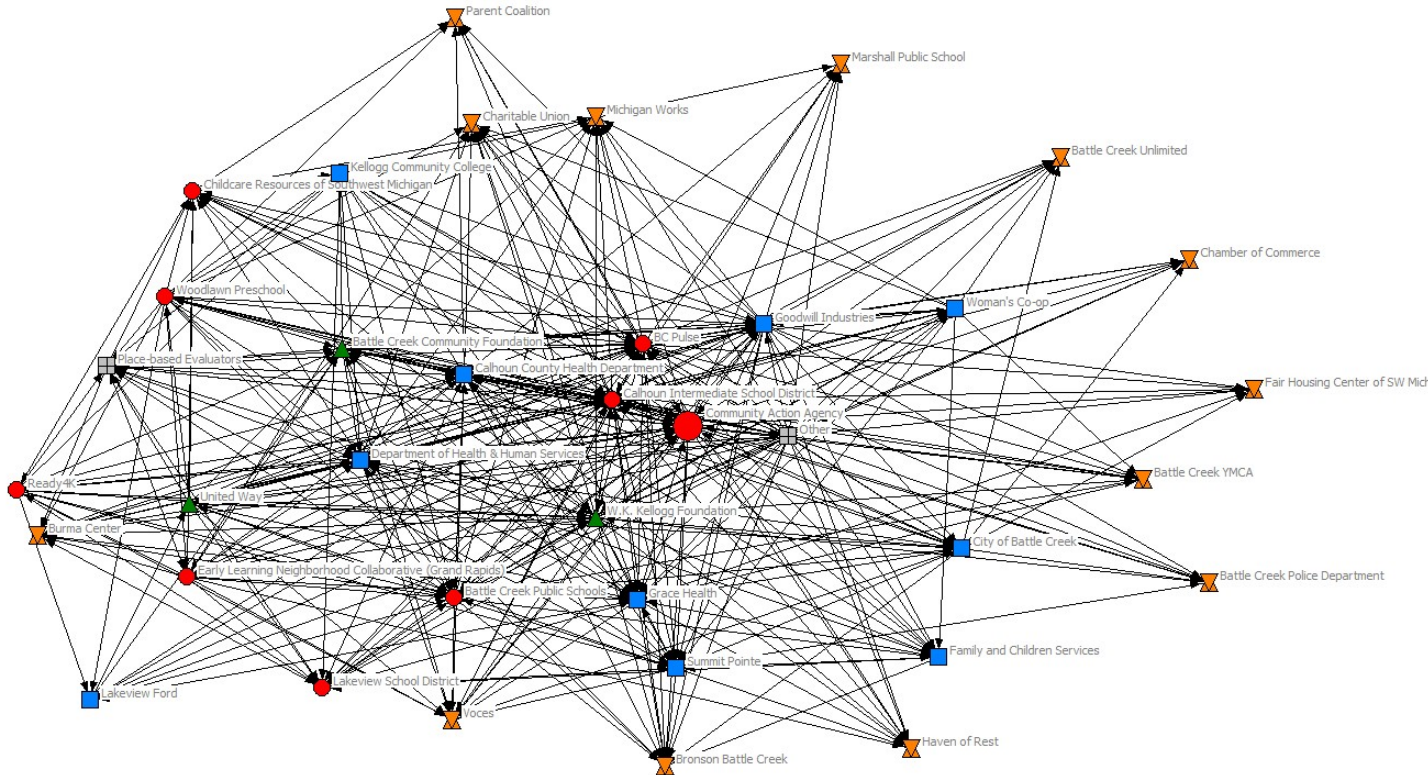
- Note.1. Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Up Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: others.
2. The bigger symbol in this diagram is the focal node in the ego-network.
3. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of interventions.

Figure 41 Ego-network of Calhoun County Health Department



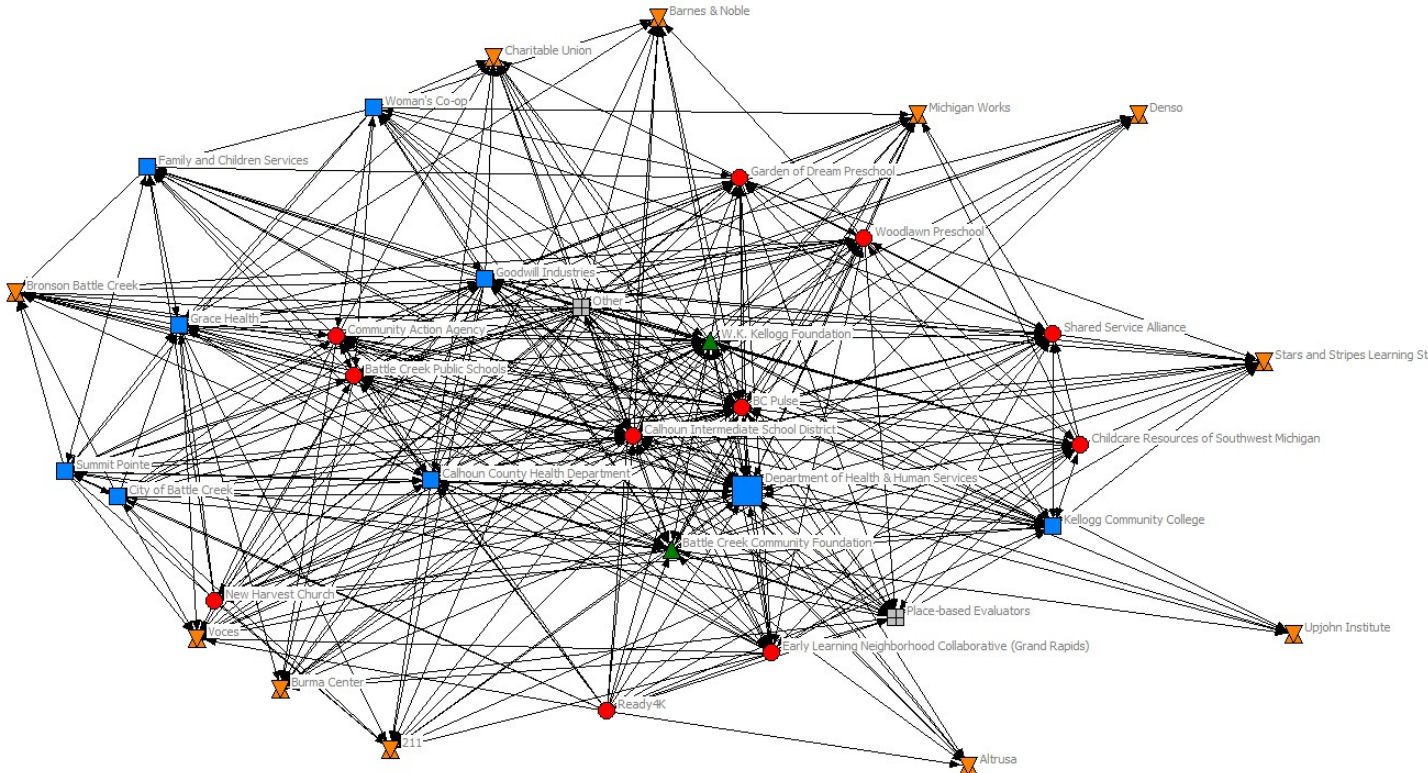
- Note.1. Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Up Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: others.
- 2.The bigger symbol in this diagram is the focal node in the ego-network.
3. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of interventions.

Figure 43 Ego-network of Community Action Agency



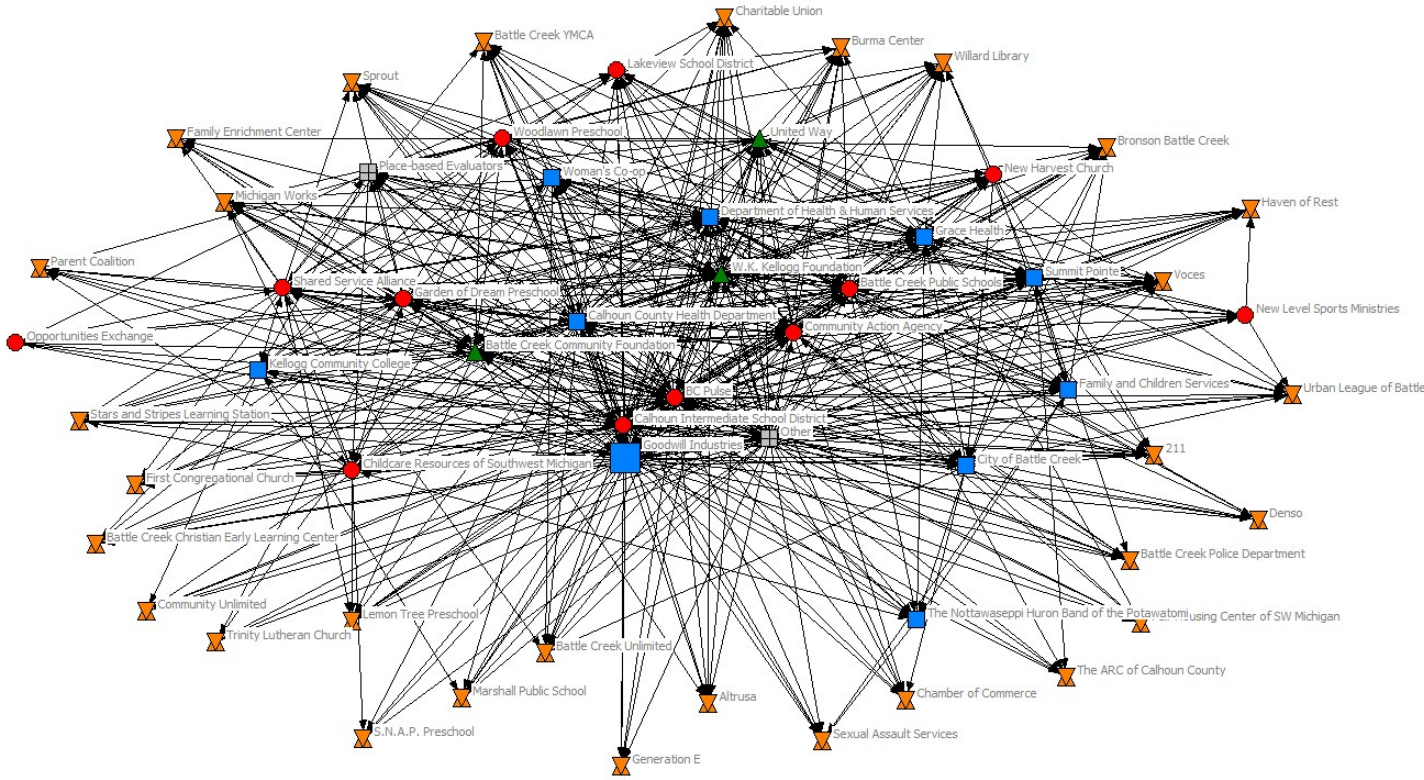
- Note.1. Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Up Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: others.
2. The bigger symbol in this diagram is the focal node in the ego-network.
3. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of interventions.

Figure 44 Ego-network of Department of Health and Human Services



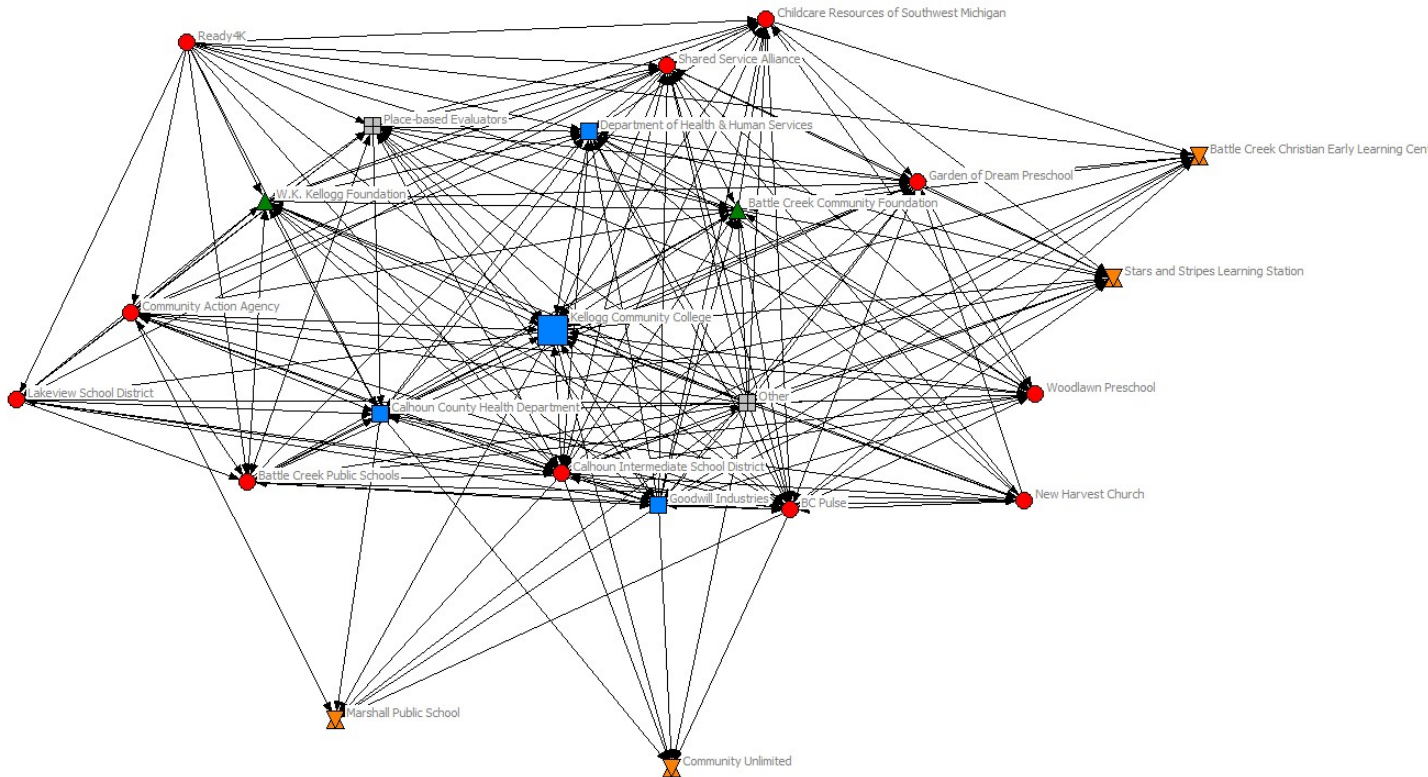
- Note.1. Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Up Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: others.
- 2. The bigger symbol in this diagram is the focal node in the ego-network.
- 3. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of interventions.

Figure 45 Ego-network of Goodwill Industries



- Note.1. Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Up Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: others.
2. The bigger symbol in this diagram is the focal node in the ego-network.
3. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of interventions.

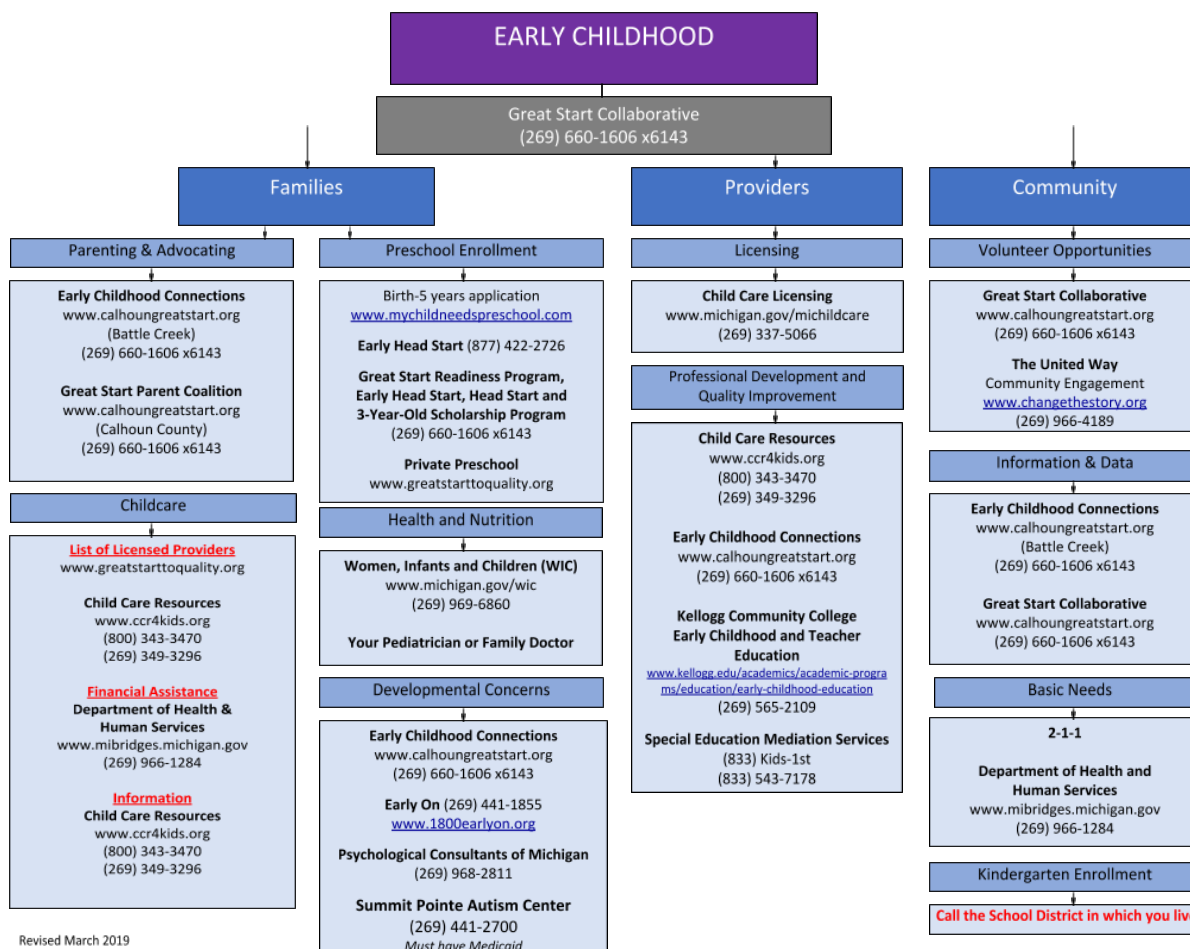
Figure 46 Ego-network of Kellogg Community College



- Note.1. Red Circles: ECE organizations; Blue Squares: non-ECE organizations; Green Up Triangles: funders; Gray Boxes: others.
2. The bigger symbol in this diagram is the focal node in the ego-network.
3. The distances between each organization are geodesic distances. It was only affected by the number of interventions.

Appendix J: Example of the Early Childhood Referral Tree

Figure 48 Early Childhood Referral Tree



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