

**Beyond Pipelines and Pillars: A Comparative Examination of Place-Based Community
Development Strategies to Support Early Childhood Development and the Frames That
Guide Them**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2018

Research on neighborhood level factors shows that place matters for young children and their families. Unfortunately, the incidence of children living in poverty has increased in the past ten years, which presents serious risks to their healthy development and well-being. This dissertation research project utilizes ethnographic methods to examine two place-based community development initiatives that are focusing on young children as a strategy to address the complex and interconnected issues that confront two urban communities. This comparative study of initiatives in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Homewood and the collective neighborhoods of the Northside presents contextualized understanding of how stakeholders of place-based community development initiatives frame early childhood within the broader context of each initiative, and the framing that guides the thinking of place-based community development stakeholders. The study contributes insight into how people see and understand the nature of social problems, how they envision potential remedies to those problems, and how they attribute responsibility to those problems.

Keywords: Early childhood, community development, place, philanthropy, social capital, collective efficacy

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1.0 Introduction

Research on neighborhood-level factors shows that place matters for young children and their families. Positive early experiences provide a strong foundation that supports healthy development, while negative experiences and environments, like poverty, negatively impact a child's future health, development, and life opportunities (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Unfortunately, the incidence of children in the United States living in communities of concentrated poverty increased by nearly 30 percent in the past ten years (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). At the local level, the number of children living in poverty also increased during the last decade. Currently more than one in every six children in the Pittsburgh region lives in poverty (DeVita & Farrell, 2014). While the effectiveness of large-scale government anti-poverty programs (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, subsidized housing, and workforce investment) is being questioned, non-profit, government, and private stakeholders are collaborating and investing time and resources to combat the causes and consequence of poverty for the region's children and their families. Increasingly they are targeting their support to place-based community development initiatives charged with transforming neighborhoods and enhancing residents' well-being, including young children.

Renewed interest in the potential for these initiatives to support children living in communities with concentrated poverty and build localized systems produced a growing body of literature describing best-practices, considerations, and lessons learned (Chaskin, 2000; Maxwell, LaMonte, & Halle, 2017; Schumacher, 2013). While these efforts focus on how communities work to build and strengthen early childhood systems, there is little examination of the individual stakeholders who drive the place-based community development process or the individuals who

may potentially benefit from the work. The interventions stakeholders propose in their neighborhoods reflect the meaning they make of their own experiences with young children and families. In this dissertation research study, I examine what community stakeholders view as the underlying "problems" for young children's well-being and development, and the opportunities for community members to create a shared vision, and how those perspectives are influenced by cultural models that guide how individuals understand and behave in local spaces.

1.1 Background and Context

In recent years the City of Pittsburgh received numerous accolades as one of the United States' most livable cities. Its previous status as a steel town has been reconstructed to include high-tech job opportunities, low unemployment rates, and a stable housing market. Despite these indicators of successful transformation, city leaders acknowledge that Pittsburgh "must still overcome the stresses associated with its industrial legacy and crumbling infrastructure, while responding to ongoing pressures stemming from urbanization, globalization, and climate change." (City of Pittsburgh Department of City Planning, 2017). Even though many Pittsburgh residents are benefiting from the city's rejuvenation, too many neighborhoods, communities, and residents continue to struggle under the burden of racial inequality and social, political, and economic exclusion (Center on Race & Social Problems, 2015; Simms, McDaniel, & Fyffe, 2015), often in the form of gentrification and a result of the successful transformation mentioned above.

Equity and resiliency guide current efforts in Pittsburgh to transform the built environments of the neighborhoods where people live and create opportunities for the people who live there to flourish (City of Pittsburgh Department of City Planning, 2017; Treuhaft, 2016). Throughout the city, neighborhood residents and stakeholders are working together to design strategies that

confront the complex challenges of their communities and ensure that residents are not just the beneficiaries of these strategies, but active participants in their design and implementation. Traditionally, planning efforts focused primarily on land use, mobility, and economic development. However, recent initiatives expand the traditional focus on the built environment and place more emphasis on the residents, their needs, and the social systems that support them. These initiatives link people and place together and incorporate strategies to strengthen education, social services, and public health. In the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Homewood and combined neighborhoods of the Northside, stakeholders recognize the importance of investing in their youngest residents to provide a strong foundation for future success in school and life. In Homewood, community-based organizations are partnering to support early care and education providers, and better coordinate the birth to career pipeline of services and resources for children and their families. On the Northside, philanthropists are acting as the catalyst for a community-driven engagement initiative to create a shared agenda that includes young children and their early care and education providers as an essential pillar of their work. Separately each of the efforts highlights the localized nature of the proposed solution. They are a reflection of the local context, the physical spaces, community assets, and the people of each community. Combined they present a model that other place-based community development initiatives can utilize to frame their support for the young children in their communities.

Early childhood research clearly shows that the first few years of a child's life are a time of immense growth. The brain develops at a tremendous rate during these years and the neural pathways that are formed establish the foundation for all future brain development (Fox, Levitt, & Nelson, 2010). Although researchers initially debated whether the typical stages of child development were solely the result of genetics, or whether they were the result of a child's

experiences, it is now understood that while genes may predict brain development, experience sculpts it (Shonkoff et al., 2012). A child's early experiences can either hinder or support their healthy development. Evidence from the applied sciences demonstrates that it is possible to design social interventions and programs that can significantly impact a child's healthy development during this time of their life (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007). These interventions range from nutrition and home-visiting programs for new and expectant mothers to providing supplemental income to low-income families, reducing the number of neural toxins in the environment, and access to high-quality early care and education programs. There is also considerable evidence showing the positive impact of these interventions many years later in the child's life, and the positive economic benefit they produce (Cannon et al., 2017; Heckman, Grunewald, & Reynolds, 2006). In addition to meeting the material needs of young children, these interventions promote positive and stable interactions between young children and the adults that care for them, which is shown to strengthen their cognitive, social, and emotional development (Levitt, 2016). A stable and responsive relationship with just one parent or caregiver increases a child's ability to develop resiliency in response to adversity and stress (Shonkoff et al., 2012).

Ideally, these findings, and others like them, should direct the focus of the above-mentioned place-based community development initiatives. However, most Americans lack a working model that accurately describes early childhood development, and in the absence of a working model, they default to models that do not capture the full range of a child's critical interactions and overly focus on the role of the family (Davey, 2009). Young children and their families participate in systems that are larger than themselves and are continually shaping and being shaped by them. One of the primary systems is their neighborhood. Conventional wisdom says that before enrolling in school, young children have little direct interaction with neighborhood

institutions or organizations, and infrequently form long-standing relationships with people outside of their homes and families. However, ethnographic evidence describes interactions between preschool children, kin, neighbors, religious communities, and health systems, which suggest that neighborhood influence begins long before adolescence (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, Chase-Lansdale, & Gordon, 1997).

Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of children under the age of five are in a regular care arrangement with someone that is not their parent (Laughlin, 2013). Much of the influence a neighborhood has on young children occurs indirectly through the neighborhood's impact on their parents and families. For example, neighborhood factors influence family economic resources, parental characteristics (e.g., education and family structure), and parenting behaviors (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993). These factors then trickle down and indirectly influence their children. Developing a contextualized understanding of child development at the neighborhood and community levels would go a long way to understanding how young children and their families are shaping and being shaped by the systems. It would also work to ensure that the early childhood components of place-based community development initiatives are as effective as possible.

The overarching focus of this study is to develop a contextualized understanding of how stakeholders of the place-based community development initiatives in Homewood and the collective neighborhoods of the Northside frame the early childhood components of their strategies. Within that structure, there are two core areas of significance of my study. The first is to examine the framing of early childhood within the broader context of the place-based community development initiative. The second is to consider the frames that guide the thinking of the place-based community development stakeholders.

1.2 Research Questions and Study Structure

During the past five years, I worked with place-based community development stakeholders in many of Pittsburgh's neighborhoods to develop environmental scans of the early childhood landscape of each neighborhood. Together we identified assets and resources for young children and their families, the major organizations and service providers, and the types of care utilized by families in the neighborhood. I continue to work in Homewood and the collective neighborhoods of the Northside to assist their efforts to support young children and their families. This study builds on my continued work in those two communities and examines how the stakeholders of the place-based community development initiative in each community utilize early childhood to contribute to their broader community development goals.

In Chapter 2 of the study, I discuss my conceptual framework that makes up the theoretical foundation of my dissertation study. Recent place-based community development initiatives rely on community members to work together with stakeholders to identify the complex problems their communities face, and how best to address them. Increasingly, supporting young children and their families is recognized as a promising strategy to help the long-term goals of place-based community development initiatives. If all stakeholders, including community members, are to play an essential role in the design and implementation of the strategies that address the complex issues communities face, the place-based community development field needs a contextualized understanding of how stakeholders frame early childhood. My dissertation research project contributes insight into how to accomplish that task by providing an understanding of how people see and understand the nature of social problems, how they envision potential remedies to those problems, and how they attribute responsibility to those problems.

In Chapter 3 I situate my research perspective in the interpretivist paradigm (Crotty, 1998). My dissertation research project takes the form of two case studies that borrow ethnographic strategies (i.e., face-to-face semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis) to compare two place-based community development initiatives. It relies heavily on face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews to capture the guiding frames of participants.

The overarching research question for this research project asks:

How do stakeholders of place-based community development initiatives frame the early childhood components of their strategies?

To answer that broader question, this study identifies a series of more specific questions related to the study's two major areas of emphasis. The first area of emphasis is to examine the framing of early childhood within the broader context of each initiative. The following questions guide this area of focus:

1. What major early childhood issues does each place-based community development initiative address?
2. How are these issues framed within the broader focus of each place-based community development initiative?
3. What are the assumptions about young children and healthy child development for each initiative?
4. How does the framing of early childhood impact the implementation of each place-based community development initiative?

The second area of emphasis examines the frames that guide the thinking of the place-based community development stakeholders. It explores how the stakeholders frame early

childhood development and the early childhood development components of their strategies. The following questions guide this area of emphasis:

1. How do stakeholders of each initiative think and talk about early childhood development and early care and education?
2. What do stakeholders of each initiative believe should be done to promote early childhood development?
3. Who do stakeholders of each initiative view to have the authority and responsibility for taking these actions?
4. What is the context that gives rise to the use of these frames?
5. How does the framing of early childhood impact the implementation of each place-based community development initiative?

In Chapter 4 I present the comprehensive findings of my study. I outline the broader trends occurring in Pittsburgh that provide broader environmental and real-world contexts that influence each of the place-based community development initiatives. I present the research findings for Homewood and the Northside separately. For each case study site, I show the framing of early childhood within the broader context of the place-based community development initiative, and I offer a model that summarizes how the stakeholders of the initiative frame early childhood development. After the presentation of findings for each case study site, I summarize and discuss those findings.

In the final chapter of my study, Chapter 5, I summarize how each place-based community development initiative reflects the local context of the neighborhood, the physical spaces, community assets, and the people of each community. I also present a revised conceptual framework that is informed by the models shown in Chapter 4 for Homewood and the Northside.

I summarize how each place-based community development initiative reflects the local context of the neighborhood, the physical spaces, community assets, and the people of each community. Based on the revised model, I discuss the significance of the study and examine key considerations and areas for future action.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

The following chapter summarizes and reviews the research and theory related to my dissertation research study. It begins by examining neighborhood effects and place-based change. It then transitions to a review of the evidence for designing interventions to impact young children positively and the best practices for community-based early childhood initiatives. The chapter concludes by examining how frames affect our understanding of the world and how we act in it.

2.1 Neighborhood Effects and Place-Based Change

Recent interest in the effects of neighborhood environment can be traced back to Wilson's book *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987). In it, Wilson argues that the loss of manufacturing jobs and emigration of the middle class from cities during the 1970s and 1980s resulted in high concentrations of poverty in neighborhoods within U.S. cities. Concentrated poverty resulted in large groups of disadvantaged residents with severely undermined life outcomes. The following decades saw a surge in efforts to empirically sustain Wilson's premise. Since that time a number of scholars have canvassed the "neighborhood effects" literature (Jenks & Mayer, 1990; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Robert J. Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002) and identified the impact of neighborhood-level factors on a number of outcomes including: economic self-sufficiency, violence, drug use, low birth-weight, and cognitive ability. In total, these studies confirm that geographic hotspots of concentrated poverty and disadvantage not only exist but also impact the behaviors and outcomes of individuals living within the boundaries.

Place-based community development initiatives target disadvantaged neighborhoods where economic decline, social isolation, and disempowerment are the norm, and they work to improve neighborhood conditions and the well-being of residents simultaneously. Each place-

based initiative is a unique collection of strategic decisions and design choices that respond to the context of the local setting. However, they are guided by two underlying principles (Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, Buck, & Dewar, 2011). They understand that the issues these communities must confront are complex and interwoven, and therefore must be addressed comprehensively and across system levels. Recent place-based initiatives differ from previous attempts to better coordinate service strategies. They are attempts to impact systems by focusing on “sustainable processes, organizations, and relationships” (Chaskin, 2000, p.1). They link people and place together by directly focusing on residents and prioritizing community building. They also believe that community residents are not just the beneficiaries of change. Instead, they can and should be agents for the change in their neighborhood.

Place-based community development goals are ambitious. In their review of two decades of place-based community development initiatives, Kubisch and colleagues (2011) found that many of the initiatives are creating change for residents directly involved in programs. Unfortunately, it is not the widespread social and community level changes intended within the typical time frame of seven to ten years. The authors conclude that to be successful, future initiatives need to manage the tension between the need for intentionality and the emphasis on comprehensiveness. To that end, they argue that future work should:

1. Align and manage the many programs, projects, and activities carried by the different individuals and organizations involved in the initiative, while continuing to build strong relationships with community residents.
2. Build and manage key relationships with key individuals and institutions outside of the community that can leverage resources needed for change.

3. Further develop the initiatives ability to continuously learn from the work by building a better way to gather and use information.

The foundation for each of these implementation topics is the need for clear goals, a shared definition of success, and a theory of how the change will occur.

2.2 Supporting the Development of Young Children

Research conducted over the previous decades clearly shows that child development is the result of the complex interaction of genetics and environmental factors (J. P. Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Consequently, there has been a great deal of interest in understanding the impact of environmental factors on child development. Ecological models of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) highlight the role of the nested and varying contexts of an individual's environment on their development. For young children, the primary setting is their parents and family, which both exert tremendous influence. However, young children are not isolated from the impact of broader environmental contexts. Although the effects of family-level factors are generally more significant than neighborhood-level factors, neighborhoods are shown to have a great deal of influence on children and their parents (Coulton, 1996; Earls & Buka, 1997; Haveman & Wolfe, 1994; Sampson & Morenoff, 1997).

A sobering reality is that the incidence of children in the United States living in areas of concentrated poverty has increased by nearly 30 percent in the past ten years (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). Non-profit, government and private stakeholders increasingly support place-based community development initiatives to transform neighborhoods and enhance residents' well-being, including young children. Place-based initiatives, like the Ford Foundation's Neighborhood and Family Initiative and the Harlem Children's Zone, have given rise to similar initiatives around

the United States. Their promise has also influenced the federal government to create place-based policies like the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhood program and the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhood program.

The renewed interest in these initiatives for young children has resulted in the identification of best practices, considerations, and lessons learned. For example, a recent review of three efforts conducted by Child Trends, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the George Kaiser Family Foundation (Maxwell et al., 2017) identified five guiding principles of place-based early childhood community initiatives.

- Collect local level data and track performance measures.
- Connect community-based effort to broader initiatives at local, county, and national level.
- Connect with and authentically engage the community and families.
- Build the capacity of the community to implement the strategy.
- Create cross-sector collaboration.

For the most part, this work is a how-to guide for practitioners to design, implement, and evaluate place-based community development initiatives. It also highlights a shift towards requiring scientific evidence as the basis for policy and practice. In their introduction to a special edition of the journal *Child Development* about translating the science of child development, Guerra, Graham, and Tolan (2011) note that there is some debate regarding the meaning of evidence-based practices. For example, is an evidence-based practice reserved for brand name programs whose ability to impact child outcomes has been rigorously tested and certified by an official organization? Alternatively, is it a general strategy derived from scientific evidence? Either way, the evidence that supports the practice is only as useful as it is known and understood

by early childhood stakeholders. In the context of place-based community development initiatives, this is made increasingly more complicated due to the variety of stakeholders whose understanding of child development may range from an individual with in-depth knowledge of child psychology to someone who rarely interacts with young children.

During the 1990's the Board on Children, Youth, and Families of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine established the Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. The task of the committee was to review the enormous body of scientific research of early childhood to update the scientific knowledge about the nature of early childhood to inform policy and practice. The committee published their conclusions and recommendations in the report, *Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), which provides a blueprint (clear goals, a definition of success, and theory of change) for how to use the scientific knowledge to nurture, protect, and ensure the health and well-being of young children.

Translating that work into digestible information that could change policy and practice is paramount to achieving any meaningful impact. Over the next ten years, a collaboration between the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University and the Frameworks Institute worked to maximize the effect of the *Neurons to Neighborhoods* report, as well as strengthen the role of science in directing the actions of policymakers towards addressing complex social problems. The collaboration developed an innovative strategy that identified three core components of a simplifying model of understanding that are not only memorable but also conducive to producing scientifically accurate actions for the healthy development of young children (Shonkoff & Bales, 2011). These fundamental questions and elements build the core story of development:

- What develops? The circuitry and architecture of the brain.

- How does the development happen? It occurs through mirroring and serve and return process between child and caregiver.
- What hinders the development? Toxic stress has psychological consequence.

To effectively communicate that core story, a contextualized understanding of the intended audience is needed.

Researchers from the Frameworks Institute combined cultural model and metaphor theory from cognitive anthropology to identify and describe the gaps between scientific and public knowledge, which are then used to create the explanations in the preceding paragraph (Lindland & Kendall-Taylor, 2012). Their work finds that most Americans lack a working model that accurately describes early childhood development, and in the absence of a working model, they default to models that do not capture the full range of a child's critical interactions and overly focus on the role of the family (Davey, 2009). They also find that verbal discourse, images in the public media, and colleagues with little expertise in science greatly influences the understanding of state-level legislators (Aubrun, Brown, & Grady, 2005; Bostrom, 2005). These findings support Bales and Skonkoff's (2011) claim that "science does not speak for itself" and transferring scientific knowledge needs to be a legitimate academic concern.

2.3 Social Problems and Frames

The issues that disadvantaged communities must confront are many, and complex. While there indeed are patterns to which problems are experienced, the specific issues vary by individuals, families, and communities. A social constructivist approach suggests that deciding which of the problems is deemed problematic and how they are viewed to be problematic is the result of social interaction.

If all stakeholders, including families and community members, are to play an essential role in the design and implementation of ideas that will address the complex social problems, the place-based community development field needs a better understanding of how these stakeholders perceive the issues that confront them, what they believe are the potential avenues to address those problems, and how they attribute the responsibility to solve those problems. The study of frames, or cultural models, presents an avenue for gaining that understanding.

Frames are mental shortcuts that allow people to recognize and make sense of the world in which they live. Goffman (1974) described them as “schemata of interpretation” (p. 21), or mechanisms individuals use to create simpler versions of the world. Often they are not knowingly applied. Instead, they are “presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared...by members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of the world and their behavior in it” (Holland & Quinn, 1987, p.4). They are built through experiences and stored in memory, and individuals with shared experiences will have shared models. These "cultural models," or patterns in thinking, help individuals to process large quantities of incoming information and interact with others by providing a common structure for understanding and interaction.

Keesing (1987, p.374) describes their immense power, and that of culture in general, when he writes that cultural models "comprise the realms of (culturally constructed) common sense. They serve pragmatic purposes; they explain the tangible, the experiential (hence perspectively egocentric), the probable; they assume a superficial geology of causation; they hold sway in a realm in which exceptions prove rules and contradiction live happily together." An individual activates a cultural model or begins to be guided by it when she starts to speak and tell a story about the world (Quinn, 2005a). However, there is not a single cultural model that guides her.

Instead, multiple models exist and guide her simultaneously. Different models are activated at different times depending on the context, which presents the possibility of contradictions between models. Shore (1996) suggests that she also constructs and activates models with varying levels of specificity. Cultural models nest within each other, with broader and more abstract models connecting over-arching policies, and more concrete models nested within the conceptual model. Understanding how stakeholders perceive the problems that confront them, what they believe are the potential avenues to address those problems, and how they attribute the responsibility to solve those problems requires a contextualized understanding of the frames that guide them. Frames present the mechanism to develop that understanding.

3.0 Study Procedures

In the following chapter, I identify and describe the design and rationale of my dissertation research project. The chapter begins by identifying my research perspective. The remainder of the chapter uses Creswell's (2003) central research questions as a guide. I examine the knowledge claims, the strategies that inform the research procedures, and the methods of data collection and analysis. I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion of my relationship to the study.

3.1 Research Perspective

Over the past five years, through my praxis as an early childhood non-profit director, I conducted environmental scans of early childhood assets in neighborhoods and municipalities throughout Allegheny County. I interviewed and listened to community development stakeholders, early care and education providers, and local government officials express their views regarding the situations of young children and families in their communities. These interactions demonstrated to me the power of qualitative methods in "exploring the broader understanding possible in natural conversations and narratives, as well as examining the essential qualities within human experience" (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p.245). My dissertation research project builds on those experiences. It offers a deeper understanding of how place-based community development initiatives utilize early childhood strategies to promote comprehensive change.

Developing a research plan that appropriately generates and critically analyzes meaningful data required me to make numerous decisions. Those decisions are often framed by confusing research terminology, like epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods. Crotty argues that these terms represent interrelated levels and critical decision points in the research design process. A researcher's stance toward the nature of knowledge influences whether

the study should employ a postpositivist or interpretivist theoretical perspective. That decision determines the research methodology, which dictates the research methods that are chosen. Each of these decisions moves the research design one step at a time from theory towards the actual. A clear rationale for strategic design decisions ensures that the process will satisfactorily answer the research questions.

The design of my dissertation research project is informed by Creswell's (2003) conceptualization of Crotty's work into three central questions. Creswell's first question asks, "What knowledge claims are being made?" It examines the assumptions about what will be learned and how it will be learned. Crotty (1998) refers to this examination of "how we know what we know" (p.8) as epistemology. This dissertation research project is interpretivist in nature (Crotty, 1998) or what Creswell (2003) calls, social constructivist. It examines stakeholder frames of early childhood or the meaning they make of early childhood in the context of their own lives and place-based community development initiatives. Socially constructed knowledge claims, according to Creswell, are based on the following assumptions:

- Humans build meaning as they engage and interact with the world they interpret.
- Engagement and understanding are negotiated based on interactions with others and historical and cultural norms that guide the process and context of an interaction.

Consequently, researchers rely as much as possible on participants' views of the topic being studied and attempt to describe them and the contexts that influence them accurately. Piantanida and Garman (1999) explain:

[I]nterpretivists do not claim that their research portrayals correspond to a general reality, but rather that interpretivist portrayals strive for coherence, which provides the reader with a vivid picture of the essence of the meanings of what is under study (p. 247).

The interpretivist, or social constructionist, approach also is well-suited to examining the complexities in meanings expressed by the participants and to develop theoretical frameworks that may be applied to other place-based community development initiatives that focus on young children.

Creswell's second question examines the strategies of inquiry that inform data collection and analysis. In other words, this element of the design process identifies the principles and plans of action informing the choice to use a particular method. To locate and contextualize early childhood framing, this dissertation research project takes the form of two case studies that utilize ethnographic strategies (i.e., face-to-face semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis) that compare two place-based community development initiatives. Bhattacharjee defines case study research as an "in-depth investigation of a problem in one or more real life settings over an extended period of time" (2012, p.40). It uses multiple forms of evidence (e.g., surveys, interviews, observation, document analysis) and is a strong research method "when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 1989, p.3). The result is a "richer, more contextualized, and more authentic interpretation of the phenomenon of interest than other research methods" (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p.93).

Qualitative research uses "complex reasoning that is multi-faceted, iterative, and simultaneous" (Creswell, 2003, p.182). The iterative design cycles back and forth between deductive and inductive reasoning while simultaneously collecting, analyzing, and writing up the data. Case study research supports this aspect of qualitative research by presenting a flexible design that allows research questions to be "modified during the research process if the original questions are found to be less relevant or salient" (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p.93). Furthermore, case study

research presents a contextualized interpretation of the data and incorporates the perspective of multiple participants. In this dissertation research project, the case study examines both the large unit of the place-based community development initiative and the smaller unit of individual stakeholders.

A critique of case study research is that the findings are heavily contextualized, which can impede attempts to generalize them to other contexts (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p.93). It is important to note that although case studies do not represent a sample that can be generalized to the population, they can be generalized to theoretical propositions (Yin, 1989). This dissertation research project employs a multiple case study approach that identifies patterns across sites. Because context greatly influences case study research findings, I chose the sites carefully. Greater explanation of site selection is found in the sections that follow.

The focus of Creswell's (2003) final question for design research is on the methods of data collection and analysis. This last element translates the strategy into actual techniques and procedures to gather and examine data. I present a more in-depth explanation of methods in the following sections.

Ethnography is the "art and science of describing culture" (Fetterman, 1989, p.11). Scholars focused on culture distinguish between materialists that see the world according to observable patterns and cognitive theorists who assume that by listening to what people say we can describe what and how they think. This study borrows from ethnography the ability to "discover the cultural knowledge that people hold in their minds, how it is employed in social interactions, and the consequences of its employment" (Spindler & Spindler, 1992, p.71). Furthermore, the study is guided by cultural analysis of discourse. Quinn (2005) argues that discourse is unlike other kinds of human activities and behaviors and deems it to be "the best

available window into cultural understandings and the way that these are negotiated by individuals” (p.3). Other patterns of human action were not neglected and often added additional context to the analysis and findings. However, discourse “is the most important place where culture is both enacted and produced in the moment of interaction” (Hill, 2005, p.159).

3.2 Sites and Samples

I chose the neighborhood of Homewood and the collection of 18 neighborhoods of the Northside as case study sites based on characteristics they have in common as well as unique traits that highlight the critical role of context on stakeholder framing. Two criteria were used to identify the case study sites suitable for this comparative research project. The first criterion is the presence of environmental factors that inhibit the healthy development of community residents, especially young children.

Both Homewood and the Northside are confronted by persistent social and economic factors that present severe risks to their residents and their young children. The Child Raising Vulnerability Index (Bruner & Tirmizi, 2007) is an easy to use visual tool that analyzes community-level factors that impact early childhood development. It utilizes nine indicators taken from the 2016 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates. The indicators are representative of four categories that research shows to be related to the effect of neighborhoods on child outcomes.

- Social Indicators: Percent of single parents; Percent of disconnected 16- to 19-year-olds (not in school or employed).
- Education Indicators: Percent of population 25 and over without a high school diploma; Percent of population 25 and over with at least a college degree.

- Economic Indicators: Percent of households with wage income; Percent of families with children in poverty; Percent of heads of households on public assistance.
- Wealth Indicators: Percent of owner-occupied housing; Percent of households with interest, rent, or dividend income.

For each indicator, the standard deviation (SD) is calculated for all census tracts in Allegheny County. Census tracts are small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county or equivalent entity that are updated by local participants before each decennial census. The census tracts that are more than one SD away from the mean in the negative direction are designated as "vulnerable" for a particular indicator. The vulnerability score is the sum of all of the vulnerable indicators for a census tract. Figure 1 shows that relatively high levels of vulnerability factors concentrate in Homewood and many areas of the Northside.

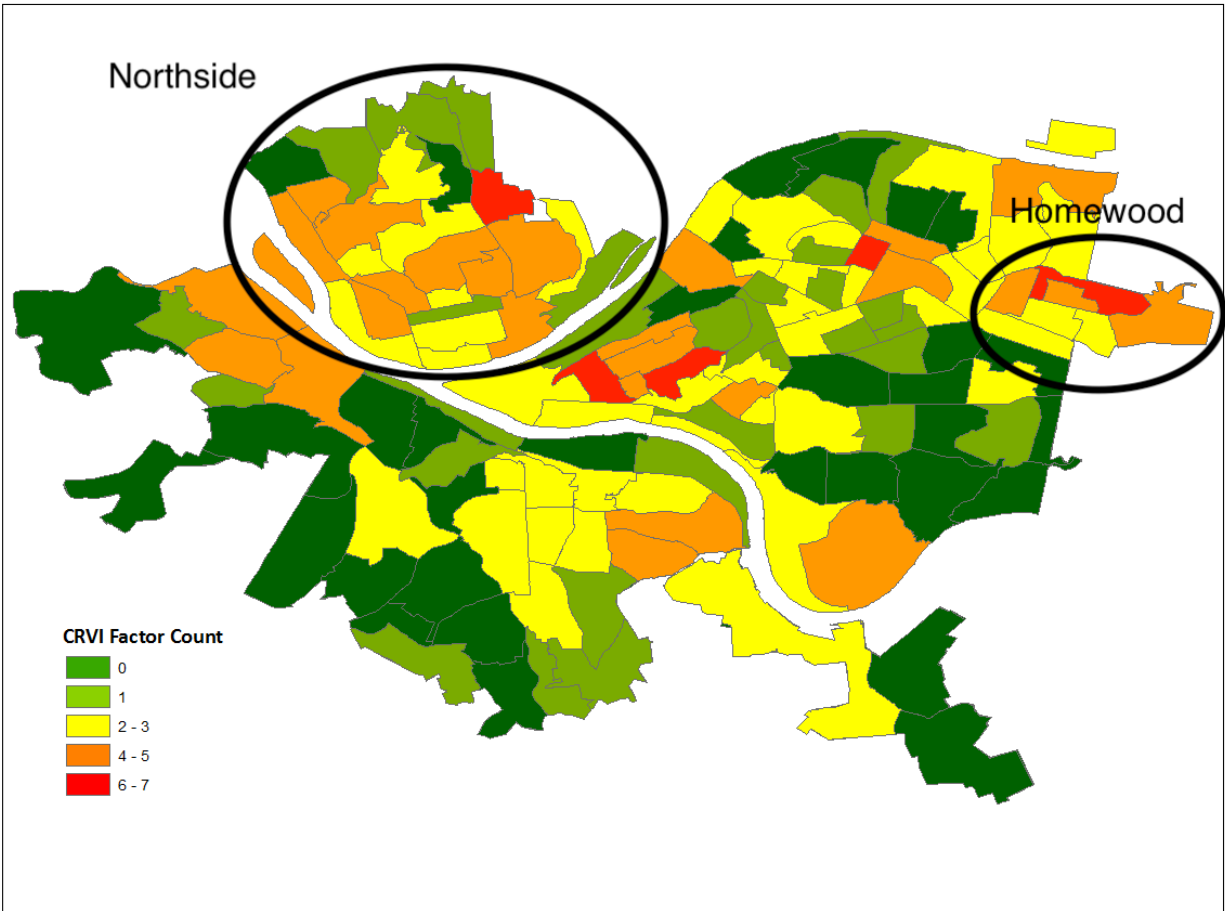


Figure 1. Child Raising Vulnerability Index by census tract in the city of Pittsburgh

The second criterion is that the community is home to a place-based community development initiative that addresses the complex and interwoven issues that confront each neighborhood through a comprehensive lens and across system levels (Kubisch et al., 2011). Also, that place-based community development initiative must utilize strategies that directly focus on young children.

Homewood is like other neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, and across the nation, which is confronting high levels of poverty, violence, declining property value, and blight. In 2008, Homewood's community leaders established the Homewood Children's Village (HCV) to provide a holistic strategy to address the "myriad social problems that adversely impact the lives of

children” (p. 137, Wallace and Teixeira). Modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone, HCV works with community partners to create a cradle to college to career "pipeline" for the neighborhood's children. Shortly after HCV's creation, the Homewood Early Learning Hub was established to support the cradle to the school portion of the pipeline. Although they are two separate organizations, they intend to be collaborative partners in addressing the factors that impact Homewood's families.

The Northside differs from Homewood in sheer size. First, it is not a single neighborhood but a collection of 18 neighborhoods. Like Homewood, it has a history of economic decline, concentrated poverty, and violence. It is also important to note that because it covers such vast geography, the Northside also contains areas of concentrated wealth and stable property values. In 2012, the Buhl Foundation contemplated how to utilize its grant-making most effectively and decided to embark on a 20-year place-based community development investment directed towards the neighborhoods of the Northside. They titled it, One Northside, and set their sights on improving the quality of life for all Northside residents by focusing on five target areas: education, employment, quality of place, health, and safety. Thematic "pillar teams" lead by community leaders began to identify specific issues, and draft plans to address them. In some cases, organizations with content expertise were contracted to support the action team's efforts. An Early Childhood Pillar Team was formed and Trying Together, a local non-profit with early childhood expertise, was contracted to help the team.

Both sites share primary characteristics that allow for comparison. There is also enough variation to understand how contextual factors may influence the problems identified and the strategies utilized to address the problems. I already mentioned the geographic scale of the initiative. An additional characteristic is the scope of the initiative. Whereas the focus of

Homewood is strongly driven by educational goals and acknowledges all of the neighborhood factors that support or hinder achieving those goals, One Northside broadly focuses on the five target areas. Education is one of the target areas.

Each of these initiatives is comprehensive and includes a wide range of individuals with diverse interests. Because the focus of my dissertation research project is the framing of the early childhood strategies of the initiative, interview participants included only those individuals who have direct input into the design and implementation of the early childhood strategy or are intended beneficiaries (e.g., early care and education providers, parents of young children). Some organizations do not operate in just one place-based community development initiative. Instead, organizations like the local school district, library system, and government are part of a broader early childhood system that directly interacts with both of the initiatives. An additional group of representatives from these organizations participated in the interviews as well. A list of all interview participants is included in Table 1 of this document.

3.3 Data Collection

I began to build the relationships needed to conduct my study more than two years before formally collecting data. Via these relationships, I identified key stakeholders and developed the trust and rapport needed to sit down with community stakeholders and listen as they shared with me aspects of their life stories and insights about their community and young children. Formal data collection began in June 2017 and concluded in January of 2018. Over the course of eight months, I immersed myself in each community. I walked the streets, spoke with residents, and attended events and meetings. I listened and watched and documented my observations. I utilized three data

collection methods to gather insights into each community. A visual overview of the data collection strategy is provided in Figure 2, and I give more explanation in the sections that follow.

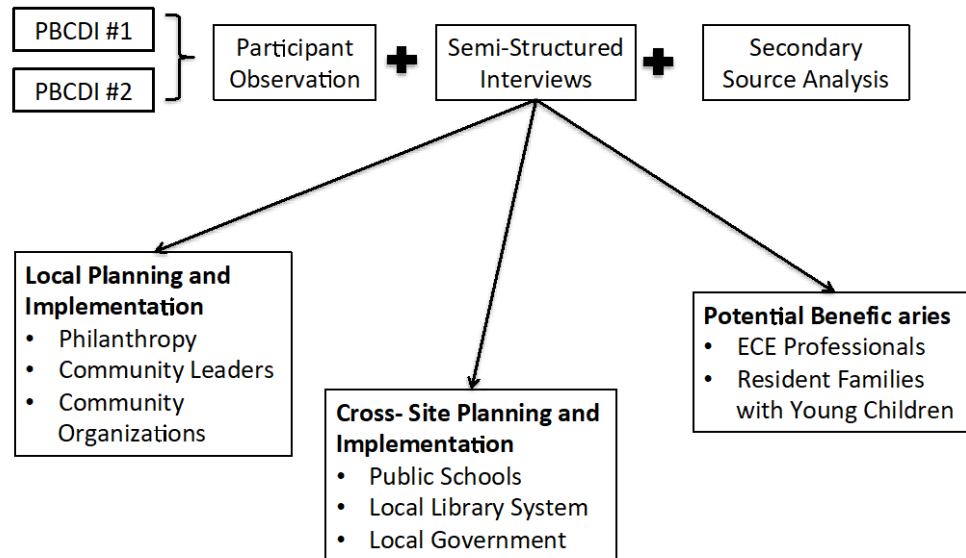


Figure 2. Overview of data collection procedures

3.3.1 Participant Observation

A key strategy of ethnographic research is participant observation. According to Fetterman (1989) participant observation “combines participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data” (p.45). Whereas the researcher in the context of direct observation is a “neutral and passive external observer and is not involved in the phenomenon of interest,” in the context of participant observer the researcher is an “active participant in the phenomenon and her inputs or mere presence influence the phenomenon being studied” (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p.106-107). My professional responsibilities, coupled with an extended amount of time in each of the site communities, added dimension to the participant observer dynamic. As part of my job, I directly participated in the early childhood strategies of the place-based community development initiatives.

In my professional role at Trying Together, a local early childhood non-profit, I work in various capacities in each of the site communities. In addition to overseeing the general work of the Homewood Early Learning Hub as a member of Trying Together's Leadership Team, I am directly involved in the design and implementation of the Early Learning Hub's internal evaluation. During the past four years, I worked directly with the Early Learning Hub staff to develop logic models of their work, and revise them based on monitoring and evaluation data, and feedback from program participants. My direct involvement on the Northside is much greater. In my supportive role to the Early Childhood Pillar Team Co-Chairs, I facilitate the Pillar Team and the implementation of its plan.

In each of these roles, I have a unique perspective of interactions between individuals, organizations, and system levels. A benefit of these roles in the community is my ability to gain consent to do the research quite quickly. Throughout the course of my work in both communities, I got to know and gain the trust of leaders, early care and education professionals, funding partners, and representatives from key organizations. These relationships established my credibility and created a “halo effect” (Fetterman, 1989) whereby I was given the benefit of the doubt by interview participants I did not know.

3.3.2 Face-to-Face Semi-Structured Interviews

My primary interest of this dissertation research project is to understand stakeholder perspectives of early childhood development better. Therefore, the predominant mode of data collection for my study is face-to-face semi-structured interviews. From an ethnographic point of view, identifying situations when a social phenomenon is discussed naturally is the gold standard. However, it would be inefficient to stand around in public spaces waiting for people to discuss the

desired topic. "Interviews must always be the methodological strategy of choice for collection of discourse on a topic...that cannot conveniently be recorded as it occurs naturally in discourse" (Quinn, 2005b, p.41). Longer interviews that allow the line between interviewer and interviewee to be blurred through conversation style discourse create what Quinn (2005b) calls "ordinary talk." Interviewees can drive how the interview is organized, and the interviewers take the role of active listener and gentle nudger if the conversation strays too far off topic. Hill also points out that, "interviews may elicit very striking and interesting narratives from people whose voices would not be heard if collection methods were restricted to 'socially occurring' discourse" (2005, p.183). D'Andrade (2005) argues that for interviews to identify cultural models the interviewer should not ask directly about the model. Instead, it is best to ask open-ended questions that will bring the underlying model into play.

The semi-structured interview format intends to "elicit views and opinions from participants" (Creswell, 2003, p. 188). The descriptive information interview participants provide helped identify any "hidden reasons behind complex, interrelated, or multifaceted social processes" that may influence the early childhood focus of the place-based community development initiative (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p.105).

I identified potential interview participants for each case study site based on their involvement in the place-based community development strategy. Initial contact with participants was done via email or phone call, depending on my previous relationship with the individual or their preferred mode of communication. At that time I provided participants with the background and rationale for the study, a brief overview of the interview process and major themes, and how I would use the information they would potentially share. To identify resident families with young children, I consulted with the network of stakeholders I had developed as a result of my work in

each community. Network connections suggested resident families with children ages five or below who were willing to be interviewed for the dissertation research project. The stakeholder introduced me to the family based on the family member's preference. Often the first contact was a scheduled phone call. During the initial conversation, I explained the background and rationale for the study, a brief overview of the interview process important themes, and how I would use the information they would potentially share. A list of all participants is located in Table 1.

Table 1. Face-to-face semi-structured interview participants

No.	Name	Organization	Position	Site
1	Lisa Kuzma	Richard King Mellon Foundation	Senior Program Officer	Homewood
	Grace Evans		Program Associate	Homewood
2	Fred Brown	Homewood Children's Village	President and CEO	Homewood
3	Rachelle Duffy	Trying Together, Homewood Early Learning Hub	Director of Learning and Development	Homewood
4	Tracy Bulls	Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center	Family Support Director	Homewood
	Neil Walker		Family Development Specialist	Homewood
5	Seth Laidlaw	Buzzword Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust	Program Manager	Homewood
6	Doris Keith-Clark	Doris Keith-Clark Family Childcare Home	Owner and Operator	Homewood
7	Shimira Williams	TekStart, LLC	Founder and Owner	Homewood
8	Taniesha Buice	Parent of Young Child		Homewood
9	April Payne	Parent of Young Child		Homewood
10	Diana Bucco	Buhl Foundation	President	Northside
11	Reverend Brenda Gregg	Project Destiny	Founder and Executive Director, Co-Chair One Northside Earl Childhood Action Team	Northside
12	Reverend Larry Homitsky	Methodist Church Union	Executive Director	Northside
13	Debbie Robinson	Training Wheels Child Care Center	Director	Northside

Table 1 continued

No.	Name	Organization	Position	Site
14	Samantha Elwood	Providence Connections Family Support Center and Child Care Center	Executive Director	Northside
15	Brenda Upsher	Brenda Upsher Family Child Care Home	Owner and Operator	Northside
16	Wendy Brennamen	Carnegie Science Center	Early Childhood Coordinator	Northside
17	Aquene Zechender	Project Destiny Early Learning Center at Community College of Allegheny County	Director and Parent of Young Child	Northside
18	Tiffany Taylor	Parent of Young Child		Northside
19	Ayesha Bulls	Parent of Young Child		Northside
20	Carol Barone-Martin	Pittsburgh Public Schools	Executive Director of Early Childhood	City-Wide
21	Tiffini Simoneaux	Office of the Mayor, City of Pittsburgh	Early Childhood Manager	City-Wide
22	Erin Zambatero	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	Early Learning Lead Librarian	City-Wide

Interview protocol questions were developed based on the dissertation project's conceptual framework and focused on the following subject areas:

1. Perceptions of the community
2. Place-based community development initiative
3. Perspective on child development
4. Strategies to support early childhood development

The protocol provided sufficient structure for analysis across participants, while simultaneously allowing the participants to dictate the flow and direction of the interview. There is a full interview protocol in Appendix A of this report. I expanded the original protocol to include direct questions

about participants' perceptions of their communities. The primary questions of the expanded protocol directed the participants' focus toward a specific subject area. Depending on participant responses, I asked additional probing or clarifying questions. At the end of each interview, I gave a summary of the major topics discussed. I also asked participants if they would like to share additional information they felt was vital for me to know, or if they would like to add emphasis to anything we discussed. More often than not, the responses to this question were some of the more insightful areas of the interviews. I assume that over the course of the interview process participants clarified or expanded upon their thoughts which resulted in additional insights. I gave participants the major topic areas before the interview. As participants responded to questions and reflected on their answers, they deepened their thinking. I believe the final questions presented the opportunity to demonstrate their own more in-depth understanding of the topics as a result of the interview process.

I conducted interviews at locations most convenient for participants, which included their offices, coffee shops, local churches, and community centers. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was recorded using "Voice Memos" software application on the iPhone. At the beginning of each interview, I again explained the background and rationale for the study, the interview process, and significant themes, how the information they shared would be used, as well as any potential risks or benefits to them for participating. Before starting, I gained from each participant their verbal consent to participate in the study. At that time I also gave participants the opportunity decide if they wanted to provide their information under a pseudonym to protect their privacy. To conclude the interview I spoke to participants again about their preference to use a pseudonym. No participant chose to use a pseudonym and consented to their names appearing in my study. Directly after the interview, I recorded personal reflections that I felt would assist my

future analysis or better illustrate the context of the information shared during the interview. These reflections became part of my field notebook. All voice recordings were transcribed word-for-word into separate .doc files and uploaded into the qualitative data analysis program, Nvivo.

The protocol for conducting my dissertation research project was reviewed and accepted by the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B). Despite consistent interactions with community members and place-based community development stakeholders, the Institutional Review Board concluded that “this project includes no involvement of human subjects, according to the federal regulations [45 CFR 46.102(f)]. That is, the investigator conducting research will not obtain information about research subjects via an interaction with them, nor will the investigator obtain identifiable private information.” I followed all protocols required by the Institutional Review Board to protect the participants of my study.

3.3.3 Analysis of Secondary Data and Documents

For each site, I gathered secondary data and documents that gave further insight into place-based community development initiatives or views on early childhood and families, or that corroborated themes I identified to be meaningful. Collection focused on secondary data and documents that provided participant language and words, as well as thoughtful portrayals of the children, families, and the goals of place-based community development initiatives. Many documents provided needed insight into the history of each community and context for the current condition. For example, documentation from previous planning processes helped locate the current place-based community development initiative in a broader community development discussion that includes partners outside of my immediate network of relationships.

Examples of secondary documents gathered include:

- Previous community development plans
- Publicly available administrative data about early care and education options available in each community
- Published reports and research about the community, its history, and the place-based community development initiatives
- Demographic information from the United States' Census Bureau's American Community Survey
- Strategy guidelines progress reports for the place-based community development initiative
- Program documents and websites explaining goals, participation, and outcomes.

3.4 Data Analysis

This dissertation research project utilized an analysis strategy for comparative case studies combined with strategies for ethnographic research and analysis. Bhattacharjee (2012) argues that a comparative case study analysis should be conducted in two stages. The first focuses on each site separately and examines the concepts and themes that emerge within the site. Data collection, analysis, and writing for each case site were not entirely separate. It was not feasible within the time frame of the study to finish one site before moving on to the next. However, for each stage I tried, to the best of my ability, to complete the work for one site before moving to the next site. The second stage analyzes the similarities and patterns between the case sites. I briefly explain the analysis I conducted for each stage below.

Qualitative research follows a continuous cycle of collection, analysis, and writing. The overall data analysis process of this research project followed Spradley's (1980) ethnographic

research cycle. This iterative analysis cycle continuously narrows the focus via repeated travel through the cycle. For example, the researcher begins by asking ethnographic questions, collecting data, making a record, analyzing the record, and eventually starts the cycle again based on the more nuanced focus obtained from the previous iteration of the cycle. The researcher uses the iterative cycle to make meaning of the multiple streams of data in relation to his personal experience at each site. Patterns and examples that differ from the pattern begin to emerge over the course of numerous repetitions of the cycle. These examples are tested via triangulation, which Fetterman (1989) describes as the mechanism ethnographic researchers use to “compare information sources to test the quality of the information (...), to understand more completely the part an actor plays in the social drama, and ultimately to put the whole situation into perspective” (p. 89).

Interview data is the largest source of information collected by this study. Consequently, its analysis deserves special attention. An initial interview question protocol was developed (see Appendix A) based on the dissertation project's conceptual framework and research questions. Since the interview format was informal and open-ended, I did not ask each participant all of the 40-plus questions. Instead, the interview began by asking broad questions that were followed by additional probing questions based on the participant's response to the initial question. The participant dictated the flow of the interviews. In some cases, the topic shifted quickly, even erratically, during the conversation as the participant thought through their responses. In other cases, the participants remained on a subject for an extended period. In each case, my role was to gently guide the participant through the significant topic areas identified in the interview protocol. I gained valuable knowledge from each interview about when it was appropriate to nudge the participant toward the next topic on the list, and when it was best to see a participant's thought

process to the end. With that said, I typically thought it best to listen, if for no other reason than to continue building trust with the participant. More often than not, my attentive listening resulted in participants sharing more personal and therefore higher quality responses. Immediately after each interview, I recorded my observations and contextual details in my field notebook. All interviews were transcribed verbatim within two weeks of the initial meeting. Completed transcriptions were saved in a .doc electronic file and uploaded into the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo. I organized the imported transcription files into separate folders for the two case studies and a third folder for the city-wide institutions. This allowed me to query information from a specific site quickly.

I followed Guest, MacQueen, and Namey's (2012) applied thematic analysis strategy to identify key themes in the text, transform them into codes and then aggregate the codes into a codebook. The analysis began with each specific transcription, continued to the case site, and then by themes. I used the first read of each transcription to gain a general sense of each participant's responses. I identified key themes and ideas and made annotations in the documents to highlight my initial thoughts (e.g., connections, questions). After the first read, I developed a summary of each participant. I began to winnow and categorize responses by applying codes to the transcriptions during the second read of the transcripts.

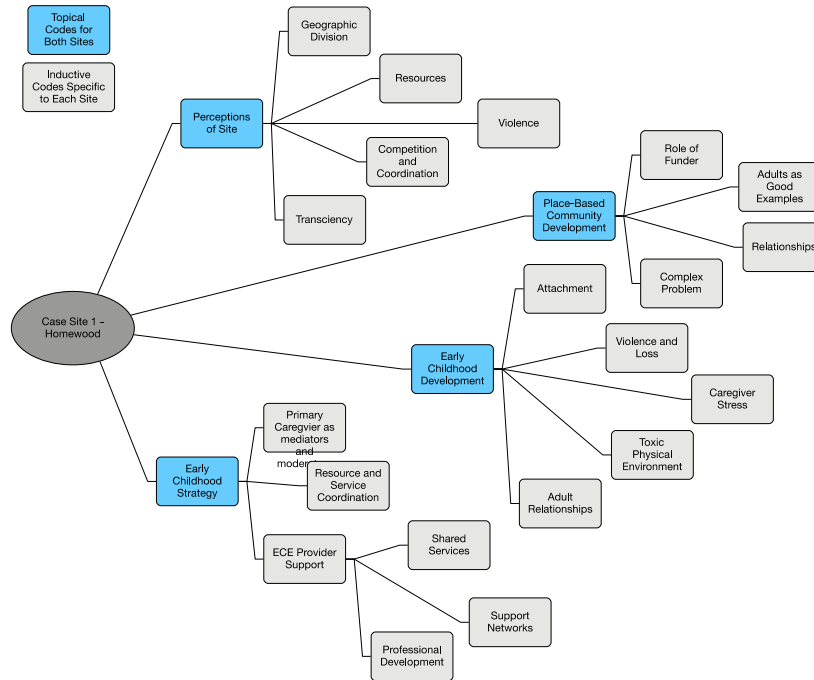


Figure 3. Coding strategy for Homewood

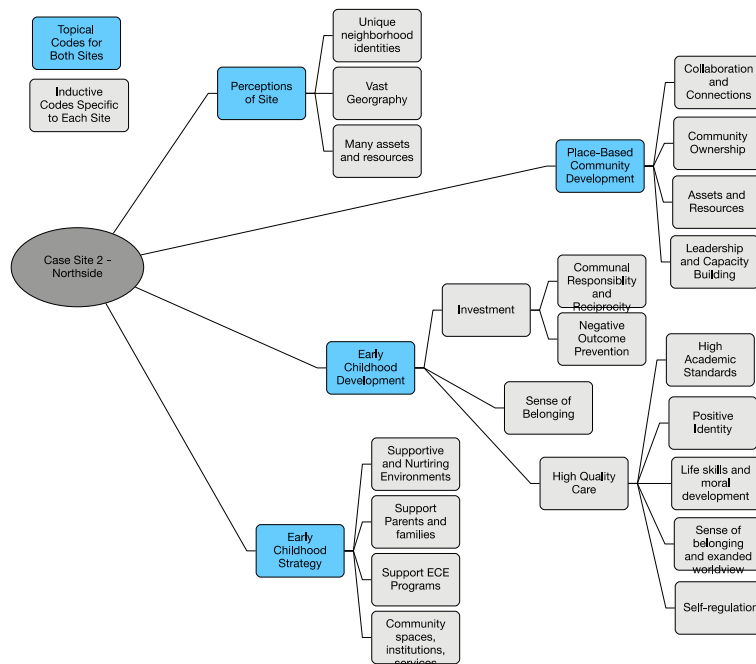


Figure 4. Coding strategy for the Northside

The overall analysis process combined deductive and inductive coding strategies. However, the coding completed during the second reading used predetermined topical codes derived from the conceptual framework and research questions to group passages into four broad categories (see Figures 3 and 4). At this stage of the process, analytic features of Nvivo, like matrix coding, were utilized to identify concentrations and patterns in responses (see Table 2). For example, some participants focused their responses more heavily in one topic area than another. Participants with backgrounds in community development tended to remain focused on place-based goals during the interview. Participants with in-depth knowledge of child development focused less on place-based goals and more on child development and early care and education strategies.

Table 2. Number of coded sections for primary coding categories by individual participants

Site	Participant	Child Development	ECE Strategy	Perception of Site Community	Place-Based Goal
Northside	Aquene	6	15	2	3
	Ayesha	14	10	0	17
	Brenda	18	26	2	15
	Debbie	17	15	5	18
	Diana	0	11	0	23
	Rev. Gregg	15	28	6	11
	Rev. Homitsky	11	16	6	7
	Samantha	16	32	4	11
	Tiffany	10	11	1	5
	Wendy	9	15	2	3
Homewood	April	9	6	5	3
	Doris	11	16	3	7
	Fred	3	11	5	20
	Lisa	3	14	10	15
	Rachelle	14	22	7	5
	Seth	6	14	8	5
	Shimira	10	16	9	10
	Taniesha	9	10	8	11
	Tracy	12	21	12	22
City-Wide	Carol	10	29	0	13
	Tiffini	7	22	0	14
	Erin	8	28	0	12

During the third read of the transcriptions, I progressed to the site level and focused on the four major categories. For each category, I inductively generated codes by looking for thematic or linguistics cues (Ryan & Bernard, 2003): repetition, categories/typologies, metaphors and analogies, transitions, causal relationships. At this stage, I began to develop codebooks for each of the sites. I started to winnow and adjust themes during subsequent reads of the transcriptions. In each case, I revised the codebook to reflect any changes. During a final set of readings, I examined the themes for each site. I looked to see if themes could be split into smaller units of analysis, or

if they could be lumped together with a similar theme. I also looked for an over-arching structure to the themes from each site.

3.5 Relationship to the Study

The qualitative researcher is an integral part of the research study. Qualitative researchers recognize that their background shapes their interpretation, and they "position themselves" in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences (p.9); "the personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self" (Creswell, 2003). As a researcher and practitioner, I work at the community, city, and state level on early childhood related issues. Most salient to this proposed research study is the work I continue to do with many of Pittsburgh's neighborhoods. I engage the early childhood community and develop early childhood needs assessments to provide data that informs strategic decisions about the design and implementation of initiatives to provide support to the local early childhood community and increase access to high quality early care and education options for the young children.

The organization I work for is invested in the participating neighborhoods of my study. In Homewood, Trying Together operates the Early Learning Hub and the Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center and organizes the Homewood Early Learning Network, which convenes local stakeholders to share information and strategize on how to better coordinate services for the neighborhood's young children and families. Trying Together does not yet operate an Early Learning Hub on the Northside, but has been contracted by the Buhl Foundation to provide technical support to the community leaders who are leading efforts to organize community members and plan for future work. As the Director of Evaluation and Research at Trying Together,

I continue to play essential roles in the design, implementation, and evaluation of Trying Together's involvement in each of these communities.

Although each of the research design decisions was made to strengthen the proposed study's ability to answer the research questions accurately, there are still limits to the study. As the researcher, I present a significant concern. Case study research demands a great deal of expertise and input from the researcher to ensure its rigor and that biased views are not allowed to overly influence the study (Bhatterjee, 2098). The second area of concern is the lack of generalizability of case study research.

4.0 Research Findings

The two place-based community development initiatives discussed in this chapter are part of broader trends occurring in the city of Pittsburgh. Before presenting each case study, I outline the more significant trends happening in Pittsburgh that provide broader environmental and real-world contexts that influence each of the place-based community development initiatives. I present the research findings separately for Homewood and the Northside. For each case study site, I give the framing of early childhood within the broader context of the place-based community development initiative, and I offer a model that summarizes how the stakeholders of the initiative frame early childhood development. After I present the findings for each case study site, I summarize and discuss those findings.

4.1 Context of Pittsburgh

It is difficult to speak about an early childhood system in the city of Pittsburgh. Instead of a clear system, there is a loosely coordinated web of early care and education programs (see Figure 5). The result is a complex and fragmented array of programs, supported by various funding streams. Many of the aspects of the current disorganized system are a direct outcome of previous initiatives and motivations for early care and education investment. The federal government is mainly responsible for formulating early care and education policy and goals, and supporting states and local structures to implement programs that are responsive to varying local conditions effectively. Whereas local governing structures have taken responsibility for K-12 funding, the

Federal government assumes the majority of responsibility for early care and education funding. Over the past decade, state and local governments have begun to contribute to early care and education, most notably via public pre-kindergarten programs.

The current Mayoral administration of Pittsburgh identified early childhood as a priority during its transition to office in 2013. During his first year in Office, Mayor Peduto called for the creation of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Early Childhood Education, which convened the city's early childhood stakeholders to provide recommendations on how the city could support early childhood. The panel called for the targeted implementation of a universal pre-kindergarten program for the city's three- and four-year-olds. In addition to pre-kindergarten expansion, the stakeholders called for investment to ensure that current community-based early care and education providers meet the highest quality standards possible. In response, Pittsburgh City Council devoted \$250,000 in 2015 and \$2 million in 2017 to invest in the quality improvement of the city's early care and education providers. Also, the city established the Office of Early Childhood within the Bureau of Neighborhood Development to coordinate the city's efforts. The Office doesn't administer any programs, but it does symbolize the city's efforts to integrate early childhood into its infrastructure and a commitment to expand early childhood from solely an issue for the local school district into a community or city-wide problem. Each of those actions emphasizes the benefits of a greater contextualized understanding of early childhood at the neighborhood level to ensure effective early childhood messaging and systems building. In 2017, on behalf of the Mayor, the Office convened the Early Childhood Education Task Force to reinvigorate the pre-kindergarten discussion and develop an implementation plan to increase access to high quality early childhood education.

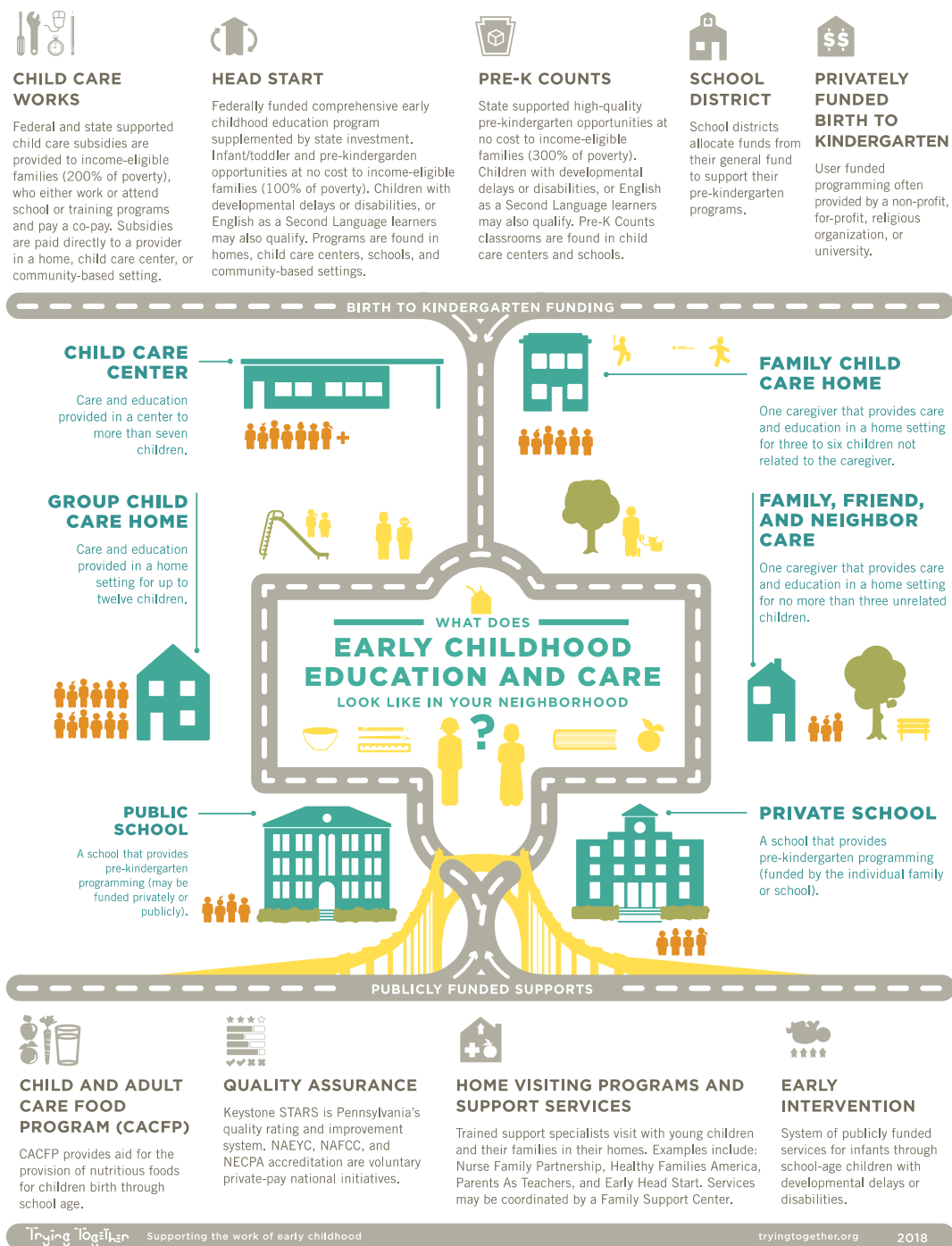


Figure 5. Components of early childhood support system

Adapted from "Early care and education landscape," by Trying Together. Retrieved March 6, 2018, from Trying Together webpage (<http://tryingtogether.org>)

Pittsburgh does not currently have a sustainable funding strategy for early childhood. A report produced by the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (2016) estimated that enrolling all of the city's three- and four-year-olds would cost between \$30-\$39 million. This figure does not include the amount Pittsburgh Public Schools already invests as the largest pre-kindergarten provider in the city. To serve as many children as possible, the district blends funding from Pennsylvania's Pre-K Counts program, and the federal Head Start program to offer pre-kindergarten at nearly all of the city's elementary schools, and Early Head Start for teen parents at the city high schools (Figure 6). By design, the programs are comprehensive and serve both parents and children. Family specialists with community-specific knowledge work directly with families to connect them to needed services, and parents learn valuable tools to understand child development better and create a healthy family environment.

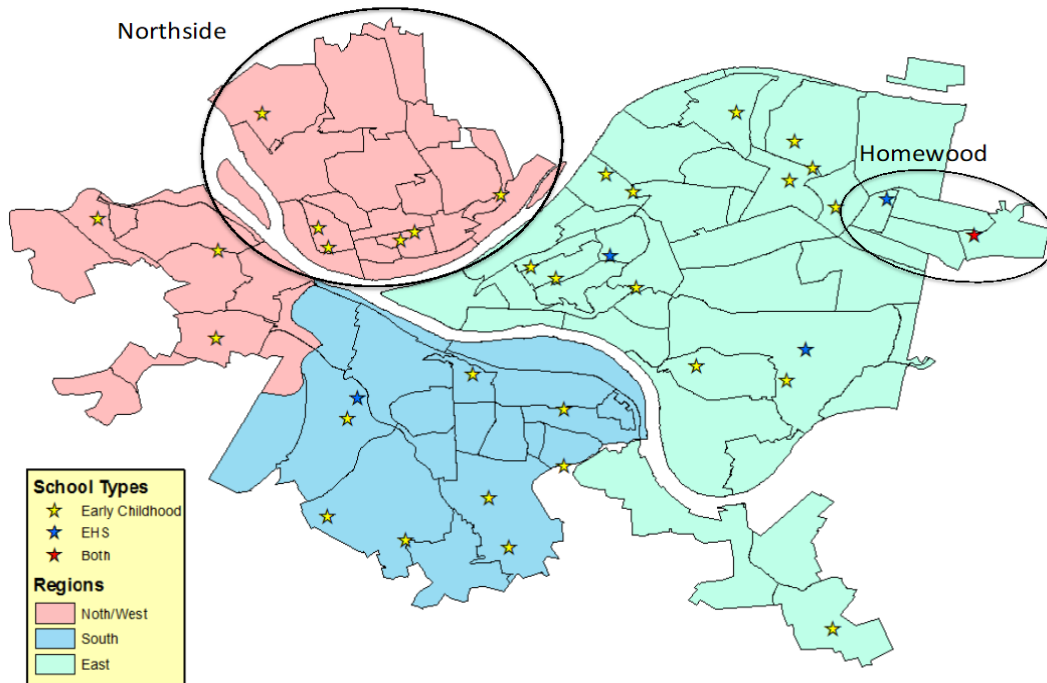


Figure 6. Pittsburgh Public Schools prekindergarten and Early Head Start locations

Adapted from “Early Childhood Classroom Lists,” by Pittsburgh Public Schools.
 Retrieved from the Pittsburgh Public Schools Early Childhood Webpage.
 (<https://www.pghschools.org/Page/669>)

The public school district is only one element of the early childhood landscape in Pittsburgh. Community-based early care and education programs contribute to a healthy early childhood system by serving the needs of families outside of the school day hours and providing care for children too young or ineligible to enroll in the public school district programs. Efforts to expand pre-kindergarten solely via the public school systems would weaken the ability of community-based early care and education programs to provide high quality care. These providers depend on consistent enrollment of three- and four-year-olds for financial stability. Removing those children to enroll in a public pre-kindergarten program removes stabilizing revenue from their programs. Also, that revenue subsidizes the much-needed care of infants and toddlers, which

is at best break-even because of the lower child to adult ratio that requires fewer children are served per adult. Pittsburgh Public Schools understands this and partners with community-based early care and education centers to deliver pre-kindergarten programming. Unfortunately, the district struggles to identify community-based providers who can meet the high program quality standards needed to meet the program requirements established by Head Start and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. Continued investment in the supports early care and education providers need to achieve and maintain those standards would benefit both the early care and education provider and the school district.

I need to highlight two additional networks. These two networks work directly in the Pittsburgh neighborhoods of the case sites to support the needs of young children and families beyond early care and education. These networks support parents' ability to form healthy relationships with their children which demands parents are equipped with knowledge of child development and parenting practices, have supportive networks, and have access to the support and services to help them meet their concrete needs. The first is the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The mission of the library is to engage the community in literacy and learning by working with both the children and adults. The library provides programming for children and caregivers to develop positive interactions through literacy. In each community, the library is also a resource for parents and early care and education providers. Parents and providers can visit their local library branch to access services and attend life skills training.

The second is the network of family support centers. It is a county-wide network of neighborhood-based hubs, strategically located in disadvantaged communities, that work in partnership with families to build protective factors of young children and families, and strengthen the bond between parents and their children. All families have assets and strengths. Identifying

those assets and building on them is the foundation of family support. It is also a recurring theme presented by stakeholders in each of the case sites. Families participate directly in the design of programming and governance of the organization and are encouraged to participate in leadership opportunities in their local and the county-wide network of family support centers. Any family with children ages 0-5 can join in the center's program, and in addition, families can request to participate in evidence-based home-visiting programs and work directly with family development specialists.

4.2 Homewood

Five years ago I began working for a local early childhood non-profit, Trying Together. At that time, the organization had recently opened the Homewood Early Learning Hub, which was my first experience in the community. I had read the news stories that portrayed Homewood as plagued by gun violence and crime, and I knew that a large portion of the predominantly African American community was living in poverty. One of my first tasks was to create a profile of the early childhood landscape in Homewood. I gathered and analyzed administrative and demographic data and plotted the results on maps. The task was easy. It was an extension of my prior experiences and training. However, I knew that neighborhoods were more than geographies described in the numbers. They are places with histories. They are where people join together and form relationships with each other. So I read reports and articles generated over the years about the state of the community and a vision for its future and spoke with residents to see if their vision matched those in the written reports. The reports created an image of Homewood best described as an

overall pattern “of persistent, self-perpetuating, and progressive disinvestment.” (Homewood-Bruston Community Coalition Organization, 2002).

Homewood has evolved time and continues to change. In 1993, a local ethnographer created portraits of four communities in Pittsburgh’s East End neighborhoods. For Homewood, she writes:

Much of the discussion of the situation in Homewood today is tinged with anguish over the physical, economic, and social devastation of a community which once represented hope. The human tragedy associated with the loss of an economic base that nurtures a stable community is inescapable. Too many young people see no hope for a job that provides a living wage, and they knew that education is no guarantee of economic success (Snyder, 1993, p. 16).

For many of the residents who were kind enough to share their stories and reflections with me, the decline in population has brought with it a loss of critical institutions in the community. Vacant lots, closed school buildings, and the memories of individuals who are no longer part of the community are signs of the missing pieces of their shared history.

Many residents stay in Homewood and continue to persevere. Some return to their neighborhood after years away and now play a role in creating a revitalized community. Most are like Doris, who acknowledges the challenges but sees past them to focus on the opportunities that exist. "At any rate, I like Homewood. There are just so many things going on out here to keep you busy. They offer so many things for the children. I just love Homewood. I do," (Doris, Early Care and Education Provider). Previous efforts to strengthen the community focused primarily on re-establishing a commercial district and housing, and the development and strengthening of community institutions. Despite progress on these fronts, Homewood has not been able to reverse the downward economic trend and declining housing market.

Guided by the mantra, “nothing about us without us,” Homewood residents are crafting a shared vision for their community. At the end of 2017, the Department of City Planning for the City of Pittsburgh began work with the Homewood community to develop the Homewood Comprehensive Community Plan. The planning team’s work to develop a shared vision and conceptual plan for Homewood builds on previous plans and efforts. While many institutions in the neighborhood are contributing to the plan, I am highlighting two that are key to developing a contextualized understanding of early childhood in Homewood.

4.2.1 The Homewood Children’s Village

The Homewood Children’s Village (HCV) was established in 2008 to provide a holistic strategy to address the “myriad social problems that adversely impact the lives of children” in the community (Wallace and Teixeira, p. 137). It is modeled on the success of the Harlem Children’s Zone, and subsequent place-based education reforms sponsored by the United States Department of Education, known as Promise Neighborhood Initiatives. The goal of these initiatives is to link strategies and create systems that move children and families out of poverty into financial stability. They seek to create a pipeline of services that span from cradle to college to career. Within that framework, HCV works to fulfill its mission to improve the lives of Homewood’s children and families, and “reweave the fabric of the community” (Village, 2016).

The establishment of HCV coincided with a shift in philanthropic funding toward place-based community development strategies in Pittsburgh. In the majority of place-based community development initiatives, foundations finance the work to “support community planning, community building, community organizing, and community capacity strengthening strategies.” (Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, Buck, & Dewar, 2011, p. 133). To a large extent, that is the case in

Homewood. The primary funding partner in the Homewood community is the R.K. Mellon Foundation. Lisa is a program officer at a local foundation and oversees much of its investment in the community. She explains, “if John Wallace had not stepped forward in Homewood and said I want to do this Children’s Village idea, I am not sure we would have gone in there” (Lisa, Senior Program Officer Richard King Mellon Foundation). Dr. John Wallace is the founder and Board President of HCV, and he presented the vision and plan for HCV that generated the partnership with R.K. Mellon. Investing in the initiative was a total risk, remembers Lisa. However, John was the on-the-ground "champion" the foundation needed to take the risk and provide the "venture capital" for the initiative.

Investing in an initiative like HCV was a shift for the foundation. R.K. Mellon felt it could generate more impact by focusing heavily on one geographic area as opposed to trying to do a little bit everywhere. Or as Lisa put it, instead of the investment being “an inch deep and a mile wide, it’s an inch wide and mile deep.” In addition to greater potential impact, the shift to a place-based strategy is an opportunity to invest over a substantial amount of time. They feel a commitment of 20 years is needed to generate meaningful partnerships with community organizations, be flexible and responsive to the community’s needs, and produce community-wide change.

4.2.1.1 The “Pipeline”

The goal of HCV is to create a pathway of direct services for the neighborhood's children. The design builds on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework of development that highlights the role of the nested and varying community contexts of a child’s development, and Comer’s (Comer, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 2004) theory of child development that identifies the pathways children need for healthy development. Unlike the Harlem Children's Zone that can

house under one institutional umbrella the majority of the programs necessary to address the contexts and pathways that influence development appropriately, HCV relies on partnerships with key organizations to coordinate a cradle to career pathway for Homewood children (see Figure 7). In this model, HCV acts as an anchor institution for the community's efforts to "improve the lives of Homewood's children and families and reweave the fabric of the community" (Village, 2016). Fred Brown, the former President and Chief Executive Officer of HCV, sees the work of HCV and its partners as establishing a "pipeline" for the neighborhood's children. HCV's role is to maintain the integrity of the pipeline and address any "leaks" that may occur. For Fred, partnerships are the primary tool used to accomplish that goal. For those partnerships to create a lasting impact, he believes they need to shift from being "transactional" to "transformational."

Transactional is how Pittsburgh functions. Pittsburgh typically functions like, I want to work with you, give me the money, I'll do the work. If the money ain't there, there's no reason for us to work together. Transformational is, we got a problem. Here's what I bring to the table to help fix it. What do you bring? (...) How do we stop duplicating effort and realign our resources? How do we demonstrate what our skin in the game is? (Fred, former President HCV).

Moving from one paradigm to the other is a process and will take time. However, for that transformation to occur there needs to be a shared understanding of the problems the community faces, goals, an agenda for how to achieve those goals, and accountability.

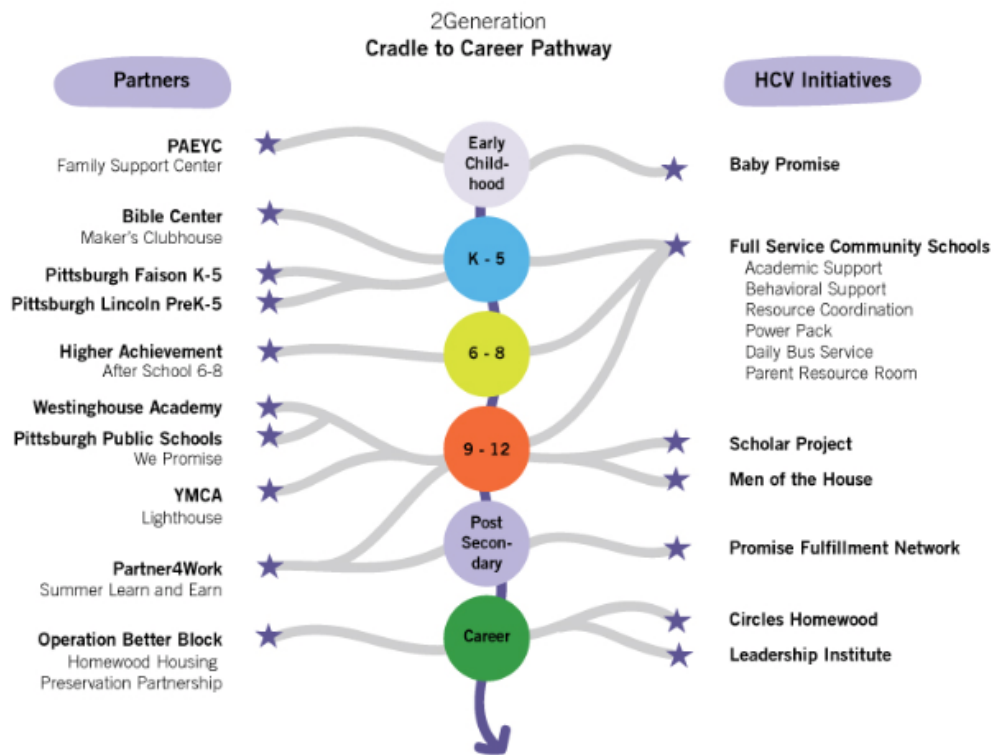


Figure 7. HCV cradle to career pathway¹

Adapted from “Our Approach, Cradle to Career,” by the Homewood Children’s Village,
retrieved on February 16, 2018, from the Homewood Children's Village webpage
(<http://hcvpgh.org/our-approach/>).

4.2.1.2 Early Childhood Programming and Support

A key partner of HCV is Trying Together, a Pittsburgh-wide early childhood non-profit. Together they convened the Early Learning Network (ELN) during the first years of the initiative. The ELN brought together early childhood stakeholders who work with the neighborhood’s young children and families to coordinate efforts and share information. Because of Trying Together’s

¹ PAEYC is the former name of the organization referred to in this document as Trying Together.

experience working with early care and education providers to support their continuous quality improvement, they were asked to act as the anchor organization for the early childhood section of the neighborhood pipeline. The result was the creation of the Homewood Early Learning Hub (Hub). The Hub maintains a physical presence in the community where early care and education providers, families and young children come together for programming. It is also a strategy that works to:

- support continuous quality improvement for child care providers in the community;
- coordinate existing resources, while simultaneously identifying additional needs and opportunities;
- advocate for the importance of early childhood.

Like many low-income communities, a substantial amount of early care and education options in the neighborhood are home-based providers (see Table 3). Home-based care is a unique care setting that more closely resembles an extension of the child's family than an academic preschool. It typically is staffed by one individual and meets a family's need for care outside of the standard work hours and for multiple age ranges within the family. Because of these unique characteristics, traditional efforts to support the continuous quality improvement of home-based providers are not always practical. In response, Trying Together developed a model of professional support for home-based providers that includes professional development opportunities that allow providers to bring their children and learn directly from Trying Together staff that model best practices. Trying Together also established a support network that connects providers to existing resources in their community and the region. Perhaps most important, participating providers created the Homewood Child Care Alliance (HCCA), an early care and education community of practice driven by provider needs which acts as a social and professional support network for

learning, and day-to-day administration and business planning. Home-based providers are often isolated. They work alone and for long hours, which limits opportunities to engage with other early care and education professionals. They are also owner-operators of their programs and assume the dual responsibilities of providing care and operating a business. HCCA provides a network of support to address those needs.

Table 3. Homewood ECE providers by provider type and Keystone STARS quality rating²

Provider Type	No STAR Level	STAR 1	STAR 2	STAR 3	STAR 4	Total
Child Care Center	0	2	0	0	1	3
Group Child Care Home	1	4	1	0	0	6
Family Child Care Home	1	4	1	0	0	6
Total	2 (13.3%)	11 (73.3%)	1 (6.7%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (6.7%)	15 (100%)

Adapted from "Public Data File," by Pennsylvania Office of Child Development, 2017.
Retrieved on March 1, 2018, from OCDEL Research webpage (<http://www.ocdelresearch.org>)

The Hub provides the beginning of an early childhood structure in the community. Whereas HCV coordinates resources and for school-age children, the Hub organizes the existing early childhood resources, while simultaneously identifying needs and opportunities. It also serves as fertile ground for future collaborations to take root. For resources outside of the community that wish to work with the community to strengthen existing efforts, or want to address an unmet need,

² Provider type is defined by the number of children a provider is permitted to care for: family child care home – 3-6 children in home-based setting; group child care home – 3-12 children in home-based environment; child care center – more than 7 in center-based setting. Keystone STARS quality rating system ranks providers on a four-star scale with four being the highest level of quality.

there is a local point of contact with early childhood expertise with whom they can coordinate the work.

Although the primary focus of the Early Learning Hub is on the adults who work with children, there are various program opportunities for parents and children to interact with each other. A popular program sponsored by Trying Together is the Raising Readers Together Club. Held at a local gathering spot, the barbershop, the barbers offer their space for families and children to come together for a meal, early literacy activities, and conversations about child development and parenting. Other opportunities are collaborations with organizations like the Heinz History Center, Phipps Conservatory, and Buzzword Pittsburgh.

Buzzword Pittsburgh is part of PNC Grow Up Great's national initiative to support early literacy development. The program functions as a collaborative of six Pittsburgh-based arts and science organizations that work with community partners to utilize the arts and sciences to promote family engagement and vocabulary acquisition. The program is now in its fourth year and has evolved considerably over that time. Each year the program deepened its relationship with the community. The original model had collaborative members rotating to different community partners throughout the year, which produced choppy interactions and inconsistent relationships. In response, members established year-long partnerships with a specific community organization that prompted productive and cohesive planning. They also utilized existing social networks between parents and community members to encourage participation and information sharing. In addition to bringing the work of these cultural institutions into the community, the program uses the arts and sciences to facilitate learning experiences for Homewood's young children and families beyond the neighborhood into the city's parks, museums, and cultural district.

4.2.1.3 Supporting Families With Young Children

The Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center and HCV's Baby Promise both provide support for Homewood's families and are therefore essential components of the early childhood section of the pipeline. Each program works directly with families to establish social ties between families and supportive institutions. With that said, there is little coordination between the two programs, and some families participate in both programs.

The Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center

Trying Together is the lead organization for the Early Learning Hub and the Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center (HBFSC). The HBFSC is part of a county-wide network of neighborhood-based hubs that work in partnership with families to build protective factors for young children and families, and strengthen the bond between parents and their children. Any family with children ages 0-5 can participate in the center's program, but families can also request to participate in an evidence-based home-visiting program and work directly with a family development specialist. Families are the core of the HBFSC. They participate directly in the design of programming and governance of the organization, and they are encouraged to participate in leadership opportunities in the local and county-wide networks of family support centers.

Homewood Children's Village Baby Promise

Baby Promise is a collaborative program that works with families with children ages 0-5. It's an 8-week program that meets once a week and follows HCV's two-generation model for parents and children "growing together for a better tomorrow." The program focuses on both parent and child growing together. After a communal meal, children participate in structured activities that often include Spanish immersion. For parents, there is a particular topic each week, which can

consist of healthy pregnancies, stages of child development, health and safety, discipline and stress management, and nutrition and healthy meals. There is also a focus on helping parents establish strong supports with each other.

Most of the stakeholders with whom I spoke described Homewood as having a large number of resources and supports (e.g., non-profits, government support services) compared to other Pittsburgh neighborhoods. Both HCV and Trying Together are working to coordinate those resources, with both attempting to focus on their section of the pipeline; Trying Together concentrating on early childhood and HCV on school-age and beyond. For the pipeline to work effectively, there must be smooth transitions between the distinct sections. Unfortunately, in my observation there is little coordination between the two primary organizations, Trying Together and HCV, evidenced by the dual family support programs. Consequently, the transformative partnership Fred described has yet to be created between the two organizations. For that to occur, the two organizations need to develop a shared agenda with agreed-upon goals and strategies. In the following section, I share a collective model based on the frames of Homewood's place-based community development stakeholders. The model is a contextualized understanding of the factors that influence young children in the neighborhood and could serve as a foundational component of the shared agenda.

4.2.2 Negative Environmental Influences on Children

My initial reading of the interviews with Homewood stakeholders demonstrated that many of them share the common belief that Homewood's young children need secure attachments, which Brazelton and Greenspan (2000) describe as "the need for ongoing nurturing relationships" (p.1).

Our babies need lots of hugs and kisses (April, Homewood Parent)

They need nurturing. They need attention. (Tracy, Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center Director)

They need to know that there are a group of people that are concerned about their well-being and that we care about them. (Doris, Early care and education provider)

Consistency in loving and intimate relationships with a primary caregiver (Rachelle, Early Learning Hub Director)

As I dug deeper into the reflections and life stories participants shared, I saw a more nuanced view of children developing secure attachments. Stakeholders framed attachment by describing the impact of environmental influences on child development and what they believe should be done to address those influences (see Figure 8). Collectively their frames expressed different components of a much larger frame of how they view early childhood in the community. I describe in the sections that follow that component of the frame and how the adults in the lives of Homewood's young children act as mediators and moderators of the environmental influences.

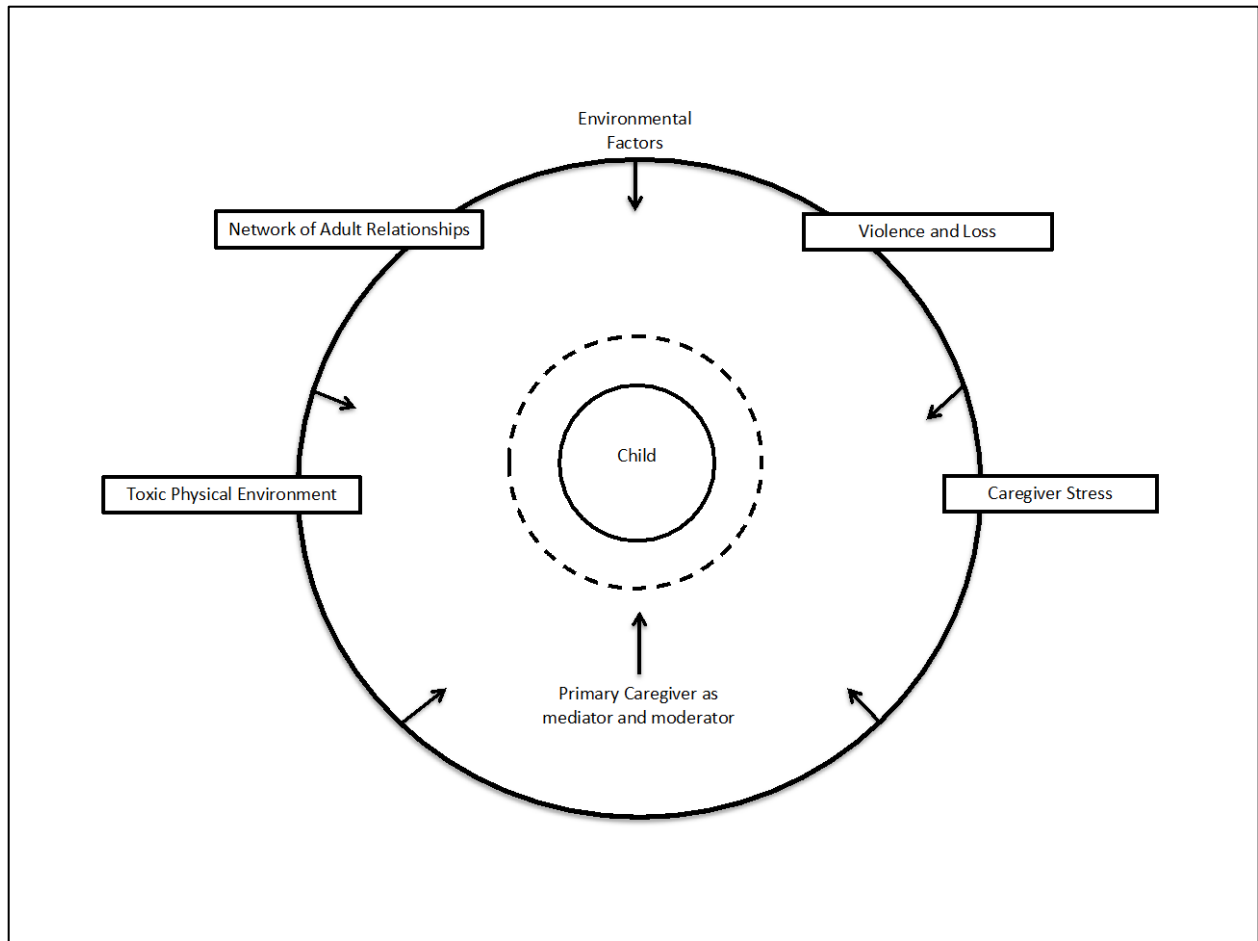


Figure 8. Environmental influences on Homewood children

4.2.2.1 Violence

While driving through Homewood it is common to see white lawn signs that say, “Stop shooting, we love you.” The signs are the work of a local artist who is spreading the message of love to stop the violence in the community. Doris is a mother, a grandmother, and an early care and education provider in the community. Like too many of her neighbors, she knows the impact of violence on her own life and the children in her care. "We deal with a lot of violence out here. It is a little nerve-wracking, but we don't want them to be fearful if they see shootings. If they don't see them, they're hearing them" (Doris, Early Care and Education Provider). Despite her genuine

desire to nurture children, so they do not live in fear, violence is possibly the most detrimental influence on child development identified by the stakeholders. Exposure to violence undermines children's ability to feel safe and secure, a core element of healthy development. Children exposed to violence experience lasting physical, mental, and emotional harm (Child Trends, 2016).

Families create different methods for raising children in high-risk neighborhoods that can range from extreme protection or isolation to fostering supportive, helpful networks (Furstenberg, 1993). Lockdowns of the local school buildings are common, and the pre-kindergarten program at the neighborhood public school recently suspended outside play in response to violence in the area. For Tracy, who grew up in Homewood and is the Director of the Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center, the lack of outdoor exposure because of violence is "disheartening because you don't know if children get outside or not." Some neighborhood families keep their children indoors to protect them, and time outside during the school day may be the only time a child is exposed to the outdoors.

The violence in the community also impacts adults. Some participants fear that adult residents normalize the violence to cope with the constant exposure. For Fred, normalizing violence extends to the program administrators in the community as well. Residents' response to the "psychotic" nature of the violence, "has dwindled their ability to be conscious of the heart part of the work. It just moves to the head because that is safer. It's theoretical, logical" (Fred, former President HCV). The result is adults who are no-longer outraged by what they are seeing and cease to address the problem with the vigor it deserves.

4.2.2.2 Caregiver Stress

When April and I sat down for our conversation, she quickly told me that she was going to "be real" with me. She is the mother of three children and a small business owner. April invests all

of her energy into giving her children the love and support they need. She is also a member of the local Head Start Policy Council and actively participates in HCV's Baby Promise. Her honesty and "real"-ness highlighted an issue that confronts Homewood and other low-income communities across the country—parent mental health. Low-income mothers are more likely to experience severe depression than their higher-income counterparts and are less likely to receive treatment (McDaniel & Lowenstein, 2013). For a parent living with depression, it is a constant struggle to balance the mental health needs of both their children and their own. Young children of parents experiencing depression feel the impact as well, and experience developmental, emotional, and mental health problems (Council on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2009).

April shared that depression was a topic of conversation at a recent Baby Promise session when the group discussed the importance of understanding what triggers depression, and what parents can do to improve their mental health. For April, the community needs to continue talking about it.

Most of the time, by the time somebody says something it is kind of late. Either that person damn near ready to kill themselves, or they have nothing left because they have done tried everything and hit rock bottom and they are absolutely tired. And, because everybody is so busy in their lives, we don't see these things (April, Homewood Parent).

When we do "see these things," argues Tracy, people think parents are just angry. "They are in such a state of depression that they don't even know that they are depressed" (Tracy, Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center Director). Parents accept people calling them lazy when in reality they are feeling the weight of life's demands, to which they think they cannot live up. According to Tracy, a key focus of family support programs is to help parents identify what they want for themselves and how that will affect their children.

The mental health of early care and education providers is also a concern. Many are community residents and parents, which means they experience the same stressors as the children and parents for whom they care. In addition to their own needs and the needs of their families, the providers try to nurture other people who have their own set of problems. Shimira, former early care and education provider, small business owner, and advocate in the community explained it this way. "You feel like you are dragging an entire community of generations, because as the provider, the parent who you are providing for and that child that you are providing for, they got all types of extra issues." Assuming responsibility for those issues, or even just being exposed to them, wears providers down and hinders their ability to care for themselves and the children in their programs.

4.2.2.3 Networks of Adult Relationships

A goal of HCV is to "reweave the social fabric" of the community. Even the use of the word "village" in the name identifies the value of networks of adult relationships for children's well-being. Disorganization theory argues that neighborhood characteristics such as poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, and high residential turnover rates make it harder for residents to come together to form social ties and collaboratively work on goals (Sampson et al., 2002). When residents join together, they can build shared expectations and values, and consequently collectively socialize children and youth through modeling, controlling behavior, and monitoring their activities (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Also, the ties that are formed promote the creation of social capital (Coleman, 1990). These social ties allow families to provide support in the form of parenting advice and knowledge of available resources, like how to access essential institutions inside and outside of the community (Klebanov et al., 1997).

The changes in Homewood occurred over the course of a generation, which means that many residents remember Homewood at a different time and they juxtapose what they see today with their memories of the community. Neil grew up in Homewood but moved away from the neighborhood for more than 20 years. He recently returned and now works with families at the family support center. Neil remembers Homewood with a thriving economic district and large gatherings at Homewood field for baseball and football games. He also remembers feeling the watchful eyes of adults with a sense of collective responsibility for the children in the neighborhood.

[I]f I did anything wrong, the lady next door, Miss B., she got the word before my grandmother, or anybody got home. So I knew I was in trouble with Miss B., and I knew once they got home, my grandmother and my aunt (Neil, Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center Family Development Specialist).

Shimira also remembers a time in the past that “if someone else seen you doing wrong, they would speak up” (Shimira, TekStart Founder and Owner). Although their memories are most applicable to older children who have the autonomy to move through the community on their own, they call attention to the importance of the interactions between adults in the community. Younger children, Shimira explains, “replicate everything they see. They replicate the good and bad, so we have to try and put more good out there” (Shimira, TekStart Founder and Owner). Adults modeling positive interaction with other adults impacts children’s perception of their community and their sense of belonging. Children who see that their parent can trust someone and can build a relationship with other community members see that a community is a secure space, and are likely to replicate the positive interactions. Taneisha, a parent of young children, argues that if children “are growing up positive and learn in a better environment, they will pass it down to that generation that is coming up.” The impact of positive adult interaction ripples through the community and over time.

Indeed, many children in Homewood can count on adult neighbors and community members to support them, keep a watchful eye on them, and model positive interactions. However, in her work at the family support center, Tracy acknowledges a different pattern. Collective responsibility requires that everyone plays a role. It also implies that there is a mechanism of social control that evaluates whether adults are meeting the standard. In response to potential judgment on whether or not they meet the standard, families are cautious. Through her experiences she knows that family dynamics are complicated and navigating them is a challenge. As a result, she feels that people are "fearful" to speak to other people's children because they can't anticipate the response they will receive. She feels the lack of trust is greater for her and her team because they represent a service agency. She explains that "for every family that we interact with, they always believe that at some point they have to be careful of what they say and what we see because they don't know what is going to happen with that." The perception that isolation is safety does not only reduce access to services. It also hinders the formation of social ties with other community members who support families in the raising of children.

Ethnographic studies demonstrate that parent access to supportive and institutional networks is critical to child development (Coulton, 1996; Furstenberg, 1993; Jarrett, 1992). Early care and education providers can provide families with additional support in the form of parenting strategies, as well as to connect them with other resources. The early care and education providers I spoke with confirmed that they support both children and parents. For example, Doris shared that families often come to her if they need help with food, and in some cases she lets families use her washing machine during difficult times. They also acknowledge their own need for supportive networks.

The Homewood Child Care Alliance (HCCA) has been meeting for more than five years. As a member of the group, Doris knows there is a need for a local community of practice. "We need to be able to depend on one another (...) rely on one another for help" (Doris, Early care and education provider). HCCA members routinely provide personal and professional support to each other and will share staff if needed. A role of the Homewood Early Learning Hub is to establish a supportive environment for HCCA and other providers in the community. In addition to peer support, providers require access to professional services that can support the children and families they serve. Rachelle, the Early Learning Hub Director, knows that providers are not equipped to address the complex needs of a family. She also believes that it should not be an expectation. Instead, providers need to be able to cooperate with the support services in the community, like the family support center, to refer families for additional support.

4.2.2.4 Toxic Physical Environments

Although stakeholders collectively identified other environmental influences, Fred was the only stakeholder to mention the physical environment. The landscape of Homewood is full of abandoned buildings, overgrown fields, garbage, and general blight. Overwhelming visual confirmation of the deteriorating physical condition of the neighborhood baffled me as to why no other stakeholders mentioned it. With that said, because of its tremendous impact on development, it deserves to be mentioned. Exposure to toxic chemicals, like lead, is shown to disrupt the development of organ systems, alter the architecture of the brain, and have life-long consequences (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2006). For Fred, this is alarming because all of the work to support children and families could be for naught.

The problem is not just educating the kids. It is not only teaching the parent, making sure they don't have developmental delays. If they're going back to a house with lead in the paint or lead in the water or lead in the soil and they are playing in a

dusty lot, all of our work is mitigated by [an] external locus of control, which is environmental (Fred, former President HCV).

He goes further to suggest that the toxic environment of homes in the community, and the elevated levels of lead in the water may be contributing to low levels of academic success in the community's schools.

For me, the topic of toxic physical environments presents an additional layer of complexity to the conversation of early childhood strategies in place-based community development. Many of the environmental concerns are the responsibility of organizations and government agencies outside of the early childhood sphere of influence. For the most part, early childhood stakeholders have little ability to sway the actions of these groups. However, eradicating exposure to these toxic physical environments needs to be a top priority. How do early childhood stakeholders exert influence on the issues that impact young children when they lack tools and expertise to participate in the discussion effectively?

4.2.3 Strategies to Support

If these are the problems confronting early childhood development in Homewood, are the current strategies designed to impact them? Interview responses of Homewood stakeholders identified two strategies. The first is to focus on the adults, or the primary caregivers, in the lives of children. The next is to focus on the coordination of services that address the specific individual needs.

4.2.3.1 Primary Caregiver as Mediators and Moderators

Adults are the primary focus of early childhood strategies in Homewood. Of course, the public schools offer pre-kindergarten programs and Early Head Start, but in the context of the place-based community development initiative, the focus is on the people who care for young children. The adult-specific strategies in community programming for young children are a good example. There are some weekly programs for young children in the community that focus on early literacy. In response to the perceived word gap (Hart & Risley, 1995; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015), the goal of programs like Raising Readers Together and Buzzword Pittsburgh is to establish a foundation of communication between parents and children. For Seth, the Buzzword Pittsburgh Program Manager, there was a shift in how they viewed their program that came from an understanding that parents are an essential part of the process. He questioned, “how is the parent learning and engaging with this and how are we communicating those messages of what we are doing to them, at the same time having the children be engaged?” (Seth, Buzzwords Program Manager). A by-product of these programs is that parents have an opportunity to converse with other parents. I am confident that the managers of these programs would love for the conversation to be a rich discussion of the benefits and obstacles to implementing early literacy strategies at home. More often the conversations are for parents to directly relate to each other and build relationships with other parents in the community.

The Homewood Early Learning Hub, the Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center, and Baby Promise all address the significant role adults play in the lives of young children, which makes sense as a response to the environmental influences that impact child development. The primary context of development is the family, and the predominant role of families and primary caregivers is to mediate and moderate influences on young children (Duncan & Raudenbush,

1999). As mediators, families and caregivers reduce the impact of environmental influences on children by controlling how much exposure occurs. They also act as, what Rachelle calls, “anchors.” Families and caregivers are consistent points in a child’s life who help them “to decompress and reflect upon who [they] are in the world around [them]” (Rachelle, Earl Learning Hub Director). The interactions between the adult and the child influence who the child is in relation to others.

A complete understanding of the "pipeline" includes parents as a part of the process. Parents do not just shepherd young children as they progress along the trajectory of the pipeline. They simultaneously engage in their learning process as their children learn, a process Rachelle referred to as "congruent learning." Reflecting on his own experiences as a father of young children, Fred remembers feeling vulnerable at that time. It is at this moment, he believes, when you can "build up parent's IQ around what [it] is going to take to create a healthy environment for your child and you, without saying you're a bad parent" (Fred, former President HCV). The opportunity to frame behavior change not as a response to a parent's deficit, but instead as a shift in orientation to the role of parenting, could carry-on to the different sections of the pipeline and continue to magnify the impact of the investment through extended parent engagement.

Participants clearly stated that addressing the instability in parents’ lives is essential, in addition to increasing their parent IQ. For individuals and organizations working in the community “it’s about recognizing that if you don’t have what you need as a parent, you don't have enough to give your kids,” Lisa explained. The same environmental influences that impact children influence parents. Moreover, parents want help. Taneisha, a young mother, explained:

Even though we invest in the children, I think that there should be resources for parents, because parents are the ones with the mental issues, the abuse, the hard lifestyles, or are trying to juggle two jobs and be a parent. If we start with the

parents, to, like, have resources for them, then those children won't miss out on the investments (Taneisha, Parent).

Investing in essential human services helps to secure human dignity, and not just to extend the impact of investment in young children.

4.2.3.2 Coordinating Resources, Setting Goals, and Shared Responsibility

Almost every stakeholder I spoke with called attention to the impressive amount of resources in Homewood. The large quantity is a tremendous asset to the community but also presents a challenge. "I'm still trying to do the math on all the nonprofits and their annual incomes. There are money and resources here. There's not a way to collaborate strategically to resolve the problem" (Fred, former President HCV). I certainly hope that Fred's assertion is incorrect, or at least will be incorrect in the near future. However, he makes an important point. Unlike the Harlem Children's Zone that can house the majority of programs under one institutional umbrella and is large enough to demand that outside services coordinate directly with them, no single organization in Homewood is capable of delivering the comprehensive system of support services to the neighborhood's young children and families. Instead, multiple organizations must collaborate.

As I mentioned earlier, the "pipeline" framework organizes potential collaboration into age ranges and creates a needed structure for the initiative. However, there still needs to be leadership with explicit authority to modify partnerships, establish priorities, leverage resources, and implement the strategies. From my perspective of collaboration in Homewood, there is tension between HCV and the Early Learning Hub about the terms of their partnership. When I spoke to each organization's leader, neither mentioned strong collaboration or even communication between the two organizations. To the contrary, Lisa, who funds both HCV and the Early Learning Hub, expressed that the ideal relationship between the two organizations would be to have a shared

goal for the community's young children, and more importantly, shared responsibility for whether or not there is progress toward that goal. Neither organization has identified or agreed upon a child-level outcome they feel accurately reflects their early childhood work. The same is true for family-level indicators. However, each organization implements similar family support strategies, which may be a duplication of services or ineffective use of the public and private funding the programs utilize. Aside from advertising each other's programs, there is little coordination between them.

Collaboration is the linchpin of effective place-based community development strategies (Kubisch et al., 2011). Establishing clear and agreed upon outcomes and benchmarks certainly helps. The specified end target of the "pipeline" is a career. However, that long-term target does not indicate what the goal should be for the early childhood portion of the pipeline, nor does it suggest what strategies to use. Homewood needs more appropriate outcomes that genuinely reflect the early childhood initiatives in the community. Lisa argues that a shorter-term goal of increased third-grade reading scores is an appropriate early childhood indicator. Third-grade readings scores are linked to successful completion of high school (Hernandez, 2011), and they are commonly used as a community level outcome measure. Do they adequately measure the capacity of adults to mediate the impact of environmental influences on young children to promote secure attachment?

I don't believe third-grade reading scores are an adequate measure. First, none of the early childhood strategies of Homewood's place-based community development initiative directly target young children. Instead, they focus on parents and home-based early care and education providers. Second, while as an outcome measure, third-grade reading scores could provide a "north star" that clarifies the purpose of the work, there are factors beyond parent and early care and education supports that influence the score. For example, the reading curriculum used by the elementary

school may be a better predictor of third-grade reading scores than the quality level of home-based care. A more appropriate indicator may be kindergarten readiness scores if the local elementary school is using a suitable tool. And third, the current early childhood portion of the pipeline would need greater coordination and additional programs like home-visiting, prioritized child care subsidies, and health care to apply a collective impact approach to achieving the goal.

4.2.4 Summary and Discussion

My intention for this case study is to identify the framing of early childhood in the place-based community development initiative underway in Homewood. HCV's imagery of the pipeline, or pathway, for children and families, is incredibly useful. The pipeline could generate a collective vision for the community. It demonstrates that early childhood is part of a larger whole that is focused on academic success and culminates in graduation and employment. At the beginning of the pipeline is early childhood, where families and young children enter into the system of support. The pipeline could also provide a basic structure for stakeholders—the system of support—to understand how they contribute to the collective work.

From my perspective there are two significant concerns. The first is that the long-term goal of the pipeline doesn't provide timely feedback to make strategic decisions on how the pipeline is functioning. The analogy indicates a model for production. Each stage is dependent on the stage before it to deliver an acceptable product. Measures of outputs, such as program participation and service referrals, provide some information. However, those measures tell us more about the quantity flowing through the pipeline than the quality. That is to say, without better measures, there is little ability to gauge whether the pipeline is producing community change. To keep with the pipeline metaphor, there needs to be strategic quality control check-points along the way. The

debate is about what the indicators at those quality control check-points should be. Any indicator chosen will impact the work that comes before it. We must also consider the purpose of the current initiatives and what aspects of the pipeline they are addressing, and how. Will the choice of the indicator reconfigure how they work and interact in the community?

The second concern is the placement of the large institutions in the pipeline. Harlem Children's Zone and Promise Neighborhoods are education reform initiatives, which is important because the ultimate goal is to improve school performance and graduation rates. In Homewood, the focus is on supporting the services that interact with schools. The depth to which improved services will impact neighborhood schools is unknown. Families' needs are complex. As organizations work collectively to address those needs, their sphere of interest will expand and present the potential for tension caused by mission drift on behalf of the betterment of the family. Continuous communication and trust would go a long way to ensuring that organizations are using the limited resources appropriately and that organizations with appropriate expertise are doing the work.

The focus on adults is consistent with other community initiatives. However, what should the specific strategy be for young children? Ensuring that the locations where they are spending time are providing high quality care and enrichment is one of many essential strategies. Continued investment in home-based care is needed. However, I have a genuine concern that more professional development for this group is not the answer. Newer mentoring and coaching models are promising, but the state government funds the current professional development work, and it would be a bad financial decision to supplant these funds despite the possibility of a better approach. This is another example of the tension in the pipeline. If this is the mandated role of

state government, and there are state funding and resources to do it, is the role of The Early Learning Hub diminished?

The strategy with the most potential is the Homewood Child Care Alliance. HCCA has the potential to serve as a model for the city and beyond. A high functioning alliance could effectively utilize a shared service model to streamline administrative procedures and cut costs. A formalized alliance could exert influence on the state government to acquire steady funding through contracted subsidy slots. However, developing a robust network of social ties will most likely increase kindergarten readiness scores or third-grade reading scores. Is there a place for the alliance within the context of the pipeline? Is it a prominent role?

The other option is to focus on the home or community environment. Much of the community environment work has focused on play. Five years ago, the community built a new Kaboom playground near the Hub, but it has been greatly underutilized. Improving physical environment is essential, but will not change the underlying belief systems that drive how we interact with young children. Given the structural deterioration of the buildings in the community and the elevated lead levels identified in Pittsburgh's water, there should more attention paid to the environment. A change in housing may benefit young children by reducing exposure to toxins, which could increase the likelihood that families will stay in one location longer. That stability increases the bonds between neighbors, which in turn extends the caring and supportive network of relationships for children, and strengthens the formal and informal network of support for parents.

4.3 Northside

The Northside is a collection of 18 neighborhoods that extend northward from the Allegheny River uphill to Pittsburgh's highest point located in Riverview Park. A journey from shore to summit passes by some of the city's most important assets including the city's football and baseball stadiums, museums, and one of the region's largest hospitals. It also passes through neighborhoods, each with its own identity. Even though residents share a common Northside identity, their social ties and sense of belonging are attached to their specific neighborhood. "I think if you say the Northside, oh yes, I live on the Northside. Yes, I'm part of the Northside. But if they say where do you live, I live in Manchester" (Debbie, Child Care Center Director).

The Northside, like the Hill District and East Liberty neighborhoods of Pittsburgh, was drastically altered by the urban renewal strategies of the 1950s. Residents were displaced, social and cultural institutions were dismantled, and highways carved-up the landscape and segregated communities. Today, more than one in five Northside residents live in poverty, median property values are roughly half of the city-wide median value, and crime rates are as much as 30% to 40% higher than the city as a whole (Neighborhood Allies, 2015). Saddled with the mistakes of the past, Northside residents are working together to create a new vision for their community, and the city is watching.

To accurately describe the framing of early childhood on the Northside, the content and organization of this differs from the previous sections about Homewood. The section reflects the context of the Northside neighborhoods and the views of the individuals working to support young children and families. I begin with an examination of the One Northside movement and illustrate the guiding principles that frame the place-based community development work in the community. I then describe how the movement is working to build connections among residents, organizations,

and partners. Building on those descriptions, I present a model, based on the framing of early childhood by the Northside's place-based community development stakeholders, that describes how resources should be invested to build safe and nurturing environments for children and establish supportive networks for parents and child care providers. To conclude I summarize and discuss the research findings.

4.3.1 The One Northside Movement

Across the Allegheny River from the Northside are the skyscrapers of downtown Pittsburgh. Throughout the day pedestrians cross over one of the three bridges that connect the southern portion of the Northside to downtown. In these buildings are the offices of Pittsburgh's financial, business, civic, and government leaders. In the office of one of those buildings is the Buhl Foundation. In 2012, the Buhl Foundation re-directed its grant-making to focus predominantly on improving Northside neighborhoods. They refer to the strategic shift as the One Northside movement. The goal of the movement is to improve the quality of life for all Northside residents. The choice of the word "movement" to describe their work highlights that it is much more than just a strategy to effectively utilize grant-making dollars. It is a collaboration with residents to create a transition, or collective progress, to improve the quality of life on the Northside. To reach that goal, Buhl pledged a 20-year commitment to the residents, and they intend to build on the community's assets, with the residents being the most valued asset on the Northside.

At the core, One Northside is an initiative to unify: to unify neighborhoods into a collective Northside; unify neighbors through communal effort toward a common goal; unite organizations into powerful systems of support. Buhl now invests more than 80% of their grant-making dollars on the Northside. They are also immersing themselves in the community to provide leadership and

support beyond their traditional financial investment. This hyper-engaged style of funding is called embedded philanthropy (Karlstrom, Brown, Chaskin, & Richman, 2007) and the following features define it:

- Commitment to a particular community or communities over an extended period;
- Direct and ongoing relationships with multiple community actors;
- Community relationships as a primary vehicle of philanthropic operation;
- Supports and resources beyond conventional grant-making (p. 2).

To realize its vision, the Northside must address complex issues that require substantial resources. Partnerships between organizations are one tool the movement utilizes to leverage the resources of multiple partners and increase its ability to make an impact in the community. In the scope of philanthropic giving in southwestern Pennsylvania, the Buhl Foundation makes up only 1-2 percent (Neighborhood Allies, 2015). Unlike larger foundations that can invest higher amounts in a community, Buhl must be innovative to increase the impact of their investments. They utilize two strategies, in particular, to effectively achieve that goal. The first is using their influence and relationships to act as a catalyst to nudge systemic change to occur. The second is an orientation to their work that is comfortable with uncertainty, is flexible, and is adaptive.

For two years I worked directly with the One Northside movement. I attended community meetings and listened to stakeholders discuss their perspectives on the condition of the Northside and where the work of the community should be focused. I sat with a child care provider on her porch as she soothed a young child who had just woken up from a nap, and I spoke with parents who wanted to know how they could access affordable care for their children. The following section draws on those experiences and focuses on three key areas of the One Northside movement as a whole, and how it is embodied in the early childhood component of the strategy. It begins by

examining the process One Northside utilized to identify common goals. It continues with a discussion on information sharing and coordination of services between organizations. It concludes by looking at additional efforts to act as a catalyst for change.

4.3.1.1 Establishing Common Goals

Since the beginning, the Buhl Foundation made speaking with community members a priority of the One Northside movement. They began by interviewing more than one hundred community and organizational leaders. These individuals shared their perspectives of the community and what they thought should be done to move the community forward. Most important, Buhl listened. Reverend Gregg was one of the leaders interviewed. She is a former health care executive who now runs Project Destiny, a multi-site after-school and child care program. Reverend Gregg is also the lead pastor of Destiny of Faith Church and one of the Early Childhood Pillar Team Co-Chairs. She has worked long enough in the community to know that many well-intentioned individuals and organizations come to the Northside to help and leave when the work is over, or the grant dollars dry up. However, she remembers feeling different, hopeful perhaps, after her conversation with Diana, the President of the Buhl Foundation.

[S]he just wanted to hear you know sort of like you know what's going on, who are the stakeholders, tell me what to do (...) really wanting to hear how can they help and how can they be in the middle of it you know what I mean, and how can they take their resources and put it where quote 'it needs to be?' And, I think when she did that many of us thought they were serious (Rev. Gregg, Project Destiny Executive Director).

A local community development firm was hired to gather information from residents on their needs and vision for the future. The firm trained residents to knock on doors and attend community events to collect responses to an 80-question survey. The result of their work is the One Northside Consensus Plan (2017), a framework that bridges the gap between residents and resources. The

initial Plan identified three areas of focus: Education, Employment, and Quality of Place. When revised, Health and Safety were added in response to community input (see Figure 9).

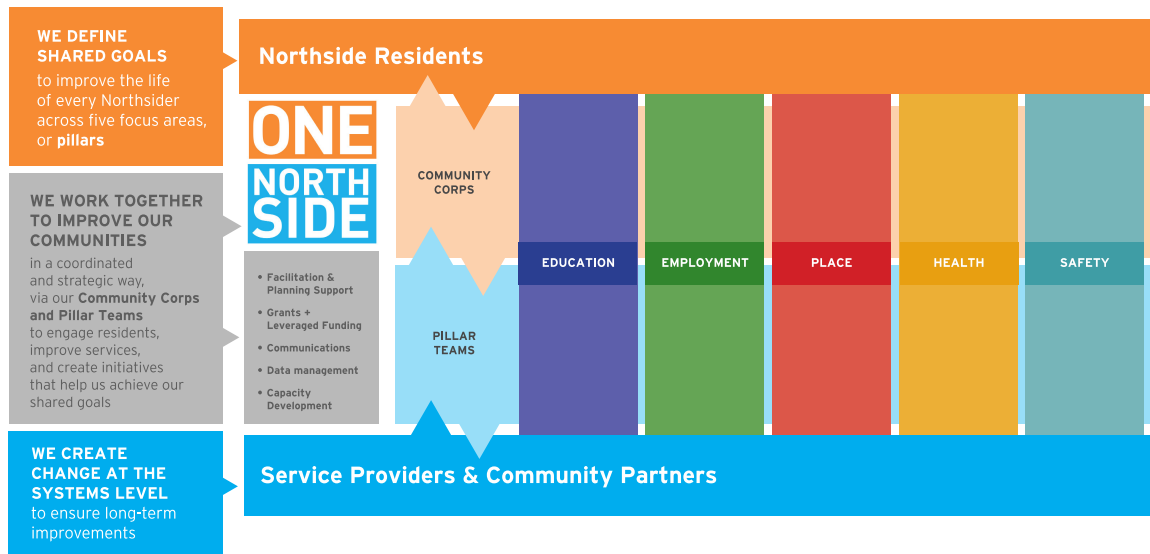


Figure 9. One Northside framework

Adapted from "One Northside Consensus Plan 2017 Progress Report," by The Buhl Foundation. Retrieved on February 19, 2018, from the One Northside webpage (<http://onenorthsidepgh.org>)

Each of the five pillars is led by "Pillar Teams" chaired by community leaders and often supported by content experts from local organizations. Although the survey included questions about access to child care and pre-kindergarten, early childhood was not a specific focus at the beginning. Rev. Homitksy is the other Co-Chair of the Early Childhood Pillar Team within the Education Pillar. He is the pastor of a local parish, and the Executive Director of the Methodist Church Union, which administers social service programs throughout the region. He attended the initial meetings for the Education Pillar Team and remembers thinking, "man, if we don't do something in [early childhood], then you know, where is the longevity of this?" Rev. Gregg also attended those initial meetings and reached a similar conclusion. As a result of their advocacy in

those meetings, both were asked to Co-Chair the newly formed Early Childhood Pillar Team of the Education Pillar.

From the onset, the early childhood goals set by the Plan were ambitious. The primary objective was to ensure that within three to five years all three- and four-year-olds on the Northside have access to high quality pre-kindergarten programs, those programs are affordable, and children are ready for kindergarten. Each one of those is a worthy goal on its own and requires a substantial investment. Although enrollment of children in pre-K was the stated goal in the plan, Rev. Gregg explained that the conversation at the beginning was about “more than us trying to, you know, get everybody into one big center or whatever. It was like, what can we do to let parents know that their kids need to be in a safe place as early as possible?”

Table 4. Northside ECE providers by provider type and Keystone STARS quality rating

Provider Type	No STAR Level	STAR 1	STAR 2	STAR 3	STAR 4	Total
Child Care Center	0	12	3	3	2	20
Group Child Care Home	1	5	0	0	0	6
Family Child Care Home	0	20	1	0	0	21
Total	1 (2.1%)	37 (78.7%)	4 (8.5%)	3 (6.4%)	2 (4.3%)	47 (100%)

Adapted from "Public Data File," by Pennsylvania Office of Child Development, 2017. Retrieved on March 1, 2018, from OCDEL Research webpage (<http://www.ocdelresearch.org>)

They decided that the first step was to work with the existing early care and education providers to ensure they could provide the best care possible. Different from the context of Homewood, the Northside has a mix of center-based and home-based care. The latter is broken down into family child care homes that can serve up to six children and group child care homes

that can serve up to 11. Similar to Homewood, a majority of early care and education options on the Northside are not identified to be high quality with a Keystone STARS three- or four-star rating (see Table 4). And, although some providers had existing relationships with the Pillar Team members, many did not. For support and guidance on how to best work with the ECE community the Pillar Team partnered with Trying Together. In line with One Northside's emphasis on gathering community input, Trying Together's first task was to engage the early care and education community. As the individual who oversaw Trying Together's work on the Northside, I conducted focus groups with the early care and education providers to understand their needs and how the Pillar Team could support their work with the community's young children and families. After the initial focus groups, providers met an additional time to prioritize their goals (see Figure 10). With the help of a professional visual artist, they identified four areas of needed support: staff development, learning materials and programming, facilities, and administration.

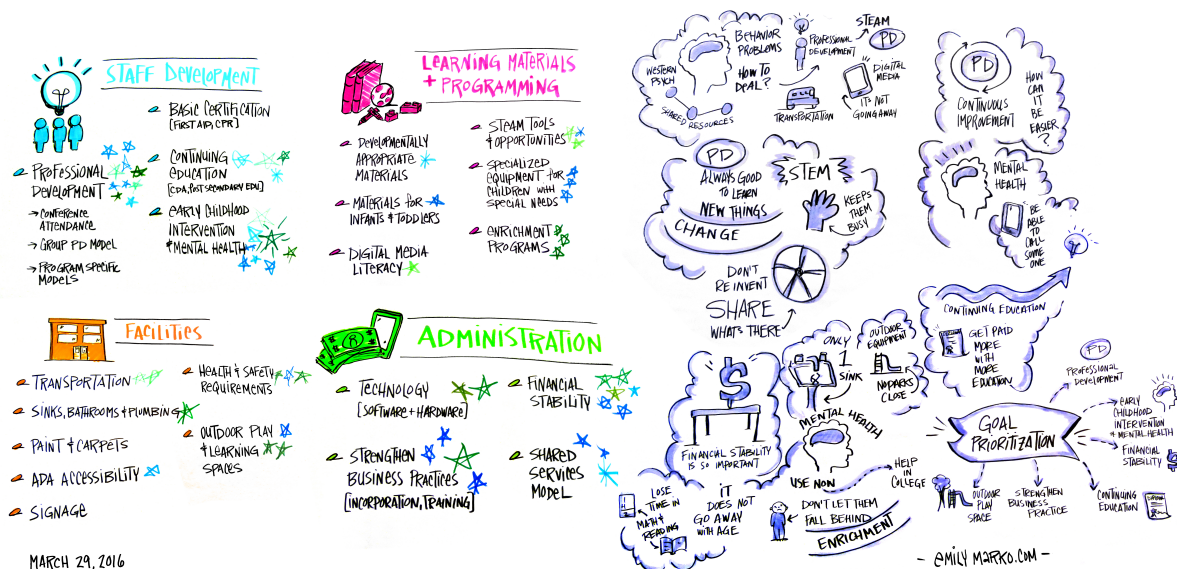


Figure 10. Northside providers goal prioritization

The Co-Chairs of the Pillar Team and Trying Together took direction from the purposeful engagement of the ECE community and hosted a professional development series on early childhood mental health. The series was well-attended, and providers expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to connect with fellow Northside providers, as well as improve their knowledge and skills. In our debriefing meeting after the series concluded, the Co-Chairs of the Pillar Team felt that a reason for the providers' positive reaction was that One Northside heard the provider wishes and promptly responded to them. The Co-Chairs also felt strongly that they needed to sustain the dialogue with the provider community. They wanted to develop a consistent feedback loop between providers and the Pillar Team. The needs assessment provided an excellent point-in-time description of what providers needed. However, the Co-Chairs wanted to dig deeper and know more about the experiences of families and providers, which would only be possible through sustained interaction. To that end, the Early Childhood Core Team was formed. Northside residents with early childhood knowledge make up the Core Team, and their purpose is to create and strengthen the link between the Pillar Team and early care and education providers by sharing information and connecting them to resources. The Core Team is the mechanism for continued dialogue and strengthening social bonds between providers and the greater Northside community. It took time to develop sufficient trust between the Core Team and the early care and education providers. However, after a year of engagement, the Co-Chairs feel like the providers are beginning to open up about the real issues they confront.

4.3.1.2 Partnering for Greater Impact

The scope of One Northside is big. It is attempting to simultaneously improve systems and engage more than 40,000 residents in 18 neighborhoods on five separate topic areas. It is impossible for a single organization to tackle a project that large effectively. Making progress in

each area requires working with dozens of stakeholders, and maintaining momentum requires constant effort and patience.

As the leader of the Buhl Foundation, Diana is a constant champion of the work. When I spoke with her, she was getting ready for the One Northside Annual Community Celebration when she and her team highlight the past year's accomplishments and lay out the plan for the upcoming year. During our conversation at a Northside coffee shop, she reflected on One Northside's progress. In the previous two years, the movement transitioned from information gathering and planning to the beginning stages of implementation. There is still work to do, but she felt that One Northside's first action steps were successful and the initiative was off to a good start. Diana is a self-described executive director with a high tolerance for risk and the instincts of an entrepreneur. As the executive director figure of One Northside, she views her role as directing the orchestra of individuals and organizations. She shared with me, "I tell people it's like a cacophony and all the individual instruments are playing, they're doing their own thing and it's chaos. But that's what you need right now because each of those individual instruments need to get really good" (Diana, Philanthropy Leader).

Learning how to play well is one thing. Learning how to perform well in concert with others is another. There are many organizations on the Northside that work with young children and families, and the Early Childhood Pillar Team presents the venue where they can all play together. One Northside is like most place-based community development initiatives in that it relies on partnerships to achieve its ambitious goals. A partnership exists on a continuum. On one side are basic networking and information sharing. As the continuum moves towards the opposite side, coordination of services, decision-making, and funding are more integrated and formalized. During the first year, members of the Early Childhood Pillar Team networked and shared

information. As a result, programs coordinated their services and shared resources. For example, the local school district gifted expensive curricular materials they no longer needed to Northside providers, which strengthened their ability to provide high quality care. The Pillar Team is still growing in its role, but there are signs that more integrated and formalized partnerships located on the opposite of the continuum are poised to emerge. For example, a small group of providers is meeting to lay the foundation for a collaboration model where group members share essential services and administrative functions.

4.3.1.3 Catalyst for Early Childhood Change

A role the Buhl foundation sees for itself on the Northside is to act as a catalyst for a strategic partnership with other funders and organizations, to encourage investment in strategic areas. As I mentioned earlier in this section, an initial early childhood goal set by the Plan was to increase access to high quality pre-kindergarten programs. There are high quality privately-funded programs on the Northside; however, the majority of high quality pre-kindergarten spaces are funded through federal or state public funds. Increasing the number of publicly funded pre-kindergarten slots in the community requires that the local school district that currently oversees both Head Start and the state-funded pre-Kindergarten program Pre-K Counts spaces in the City of Pittsburgh, to re-distribute to the Northside the finite number of spaces they currently administer for the entire city, or that they find outside funding that can be directed to the Northside. The per year investment to establish and sustain those spaces is beyond what Buhl, and other foundations, is willing to support. However, acting as the catalyst, Buhl is at the very early stage of discussion with potential partners in local philanthropy, the public school district, and Northside cultural institutions to expand access to publicly funded pre-kindergarten in one of the public housing

complexes. They are brokering their relationships with the other institutions to leverage investment and target them to the benefit of Northside residents.

For parents, the cost of high quality early care and education is prohibitive, and many are obligated to choose lower quality options than they prefer because it is the option they can afford or the option to which they have access. Although the public school district operates a pre-Kindergarten program, eligibility is based on income guidelines established by Head Start and Pre-K Counts. The federal government establishes Head Start eligibility at 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. The income eligibility criterion for Pre-K Counts is higher, at 300% of the Federal Poverty Level. However, the number of Pre-K Counts spaces is less than Head Start spaces. Ayeshah, a parent of a preschool-aged child, hoped to send her child to the publicly-funded pre-kindergarten program in her community. She shared that, “when I looked at the school, our neighborhood school, preschool wasn't free for us. And I did not know that. I thought public school was free for all kids. But it is not free for higher income families” (Ayeshah, Northside Parent). Child care subsidy is the only other public support available to families hoping to enroll their children in early care and education programs. Just like publicly funded pre-K, only families who meet income and work requirements are eligible. For parents like Ayeshah who earn more than the income eligibility threshold, there is no direct public financial support for early care and education.

I share this example for two reasons. First, it highlights that the cost of care is a significant issue for Northside families. Parents with access to early care and education are more likely to be employed (Brooks, Risler, Hamilton, & Nackerud, 2002) and experience improved family financial well-being (Ha, 2009). Each is integral to improving the quality of life for Northside residents. Many parents do not have access to affordable high quality care. Second, addressing the cost of care requires policy changes and additional investment at the local, state, and federal levels.

For example, establishing early care and education reimbursement rates that reflect the actual cost of high quality care and would allow providers to fairly compensate their staff, thereby strengthening the quality and continuity of care, requires state-level policy changes, or significant local investment. Consequently, part of a place-based community development initiative's success depends on how well it can effectively advocate for policy changes that will support the initiative's goals.

4.3.2 Investing in Relationships and Building Social Capital

There are various metaphors for young children. Children are gifts from God or blessings. They are viewed as assets to a family because they provide additional hands for work and financial stability to aging parents. They are considered as sources of potential danger if left alone. They also represent the innocence that should not be spoiled. They are sources of joy who teach us to focus on the simple things in life. They are also soldiers in armed conflicts and are reminders of past decisions. An increasingly popular metaphor for young children is they are an investment. Families and society invest resources in young children during the early years of life, and in the future, they return to us a more significant amount than we initially invested in them.

Economists calculate a substantial monetary return for investments in early care and education (Heckman et al., 2006). The promise of short- and long-term benefits grabs the attention of place-based community development stakeholders and certainly contributes to the inclusion of early childhood strategies in the initiative. Many of the Northsiders with whom I spoke also calculate a return for an investment in early childhood. However, Table 5 highlights two critical differences in the type of return expected by community stakeholders. While policymakers and business leaders want to see a return in dollars and cents, many of the community stakeholders

anticipate their return in terms of communal responsibility and reciprocity. The young children of today will assume responsibility for the direction of the community in the future. They will also assume the role of caregiver and will be in charge of the care provided to the aging adults in the community. Even though there is an optimism associated with looking forward into the future, for some stakeholders the fear of adverse outcomes they believe are inevitable accompanies the optimism. In other words, if we don't act now, it will be too late in the future. To this point, some of the community members reflected on life stories when young adults made life-impacting decisions, and they wonder why something wasn't done earlier. To these individuals, early care and education present a mechanism for intervening early and helping young people succeed in the context of the negative environmental influences in their lives.

Table 5. Orientation of investment responses

Investment Response 1	
Communal Responsibility and Reciprocity	But these children are our future. And they are the people that are going to be running this country and it is so important that we know how important it is these first three years of life. (Debbie, Early Care and Education Provider)
	They are important to me, Chad. I mean really important. They are going to be responsible for me at one point. They're going to be the mayor or the governor or the president. And if they don't know how to love, oh boy! (Brenda, Early care and education provider)
	It is so cliché and corny to say, but legitimately when we are not working anymore it is going to be them. Eventually we are relying on these next generations for hopefully Social Security. So if we don't make sure that we are advocating for and empowering them to advocate for themselves and communicating with them, truly with them as the focus, we won't have a future. (Aquene, Early care and education provider)
Investment Response 2	
Negative Outcome Prevention	I think that people are realizing if we get these little ones and work with them then you know we won't have to worry about the jails, those kind of things. If we invest in our children right now there will be a difference made (Debbie, Early care and education provider).
	When I look at kids who end up in prison and what has happened, some of them get off on the wrong track because of drugs or whatever. But a lot of it has to do because I don't think we paid attention when they were young, to

Table 5 continued

	what was happening in their lives and what needed to be done (Rev. Gregg, Project Destiny Executive Director).
	First off I think we need to let them know that we see them because they are the forgotten few and they are not quite at the terroristic age where they are carrying guns so nobody is, and they are watching them come into that area where they may cross over and everyone is just watching. Somewhat he needs to intervene and make sure the correct path is chosen. (Brenda, Early care and education provider)
	We have to start when they are little because if not then, people are a lost cause at 14. But if I can teach you to have compassion for one another and problem solving and social-emotional skills at 4 and continue to support you in that, you're going to have the resolution and maybe the focus in school that you're not getting into gun battles outside of high school (Sam, Providence Connections Executive Director).

At the core of communal responsibility, reciprocity, and intervention is connection and relationship building. This critical element of stakeholder sentiment is also evident in the broader plan for One Northside. The most succinct explanation of what One Northside works to accomplish is from Diana. She explained that "it's really about building relationships. I mean, at the core of the One Northside strategy is one, changing hearts and minds, and two, rebuilding the social fabric" (Diana, Buhl Foundation President). The last few words of her statement, "rebuilding the social fabric," stick out to me. They echo the foundational goal of the work in Homewood. They also demonstrate that place-based community development initiatives frequently highlight the importance of relationship building between everyone involved. In the section that follows I present a model for understanding the strategies identified by Northside stakeholders to strengthen relationships and build social capital to support young children.

A prominent over-arching theme expressed was the importance of social relationships for children, their parents, and early care and education providers. The term used by scholars to describe the network of social relations in a community that enables it to function is "social capital" (R. D. Putnam, 1995). In early childhood terms, social capital is significant because it contributes

to adults in the community being able to look after each other informally and each other's children (Berlin, Brooks-Gunn, & Aber, 2001). This is done through three types of social ties: bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding ties are strong links between social groups or networks that are similar in some way (e.g., race, age, socio-economic status, social group), whereas bridging ties are weaker links across social groups and networks (R. Putnam, 2000; R. D. Putnam, 1995). The last social tie, linking (Woolcock, 2001) is an extension of bridging ties but extends to institutions, and is characterized by a power difference between the two parties.

The model below presents stakeholder perspectives on the role of relationships and social capital in early childhood on the Northside (see Figure 11). At its center, the core element is the child. Connected to the young child are their family and the early care and education providers who care for them. These core relationships, collectively and individually, interact with community institutions and resources.

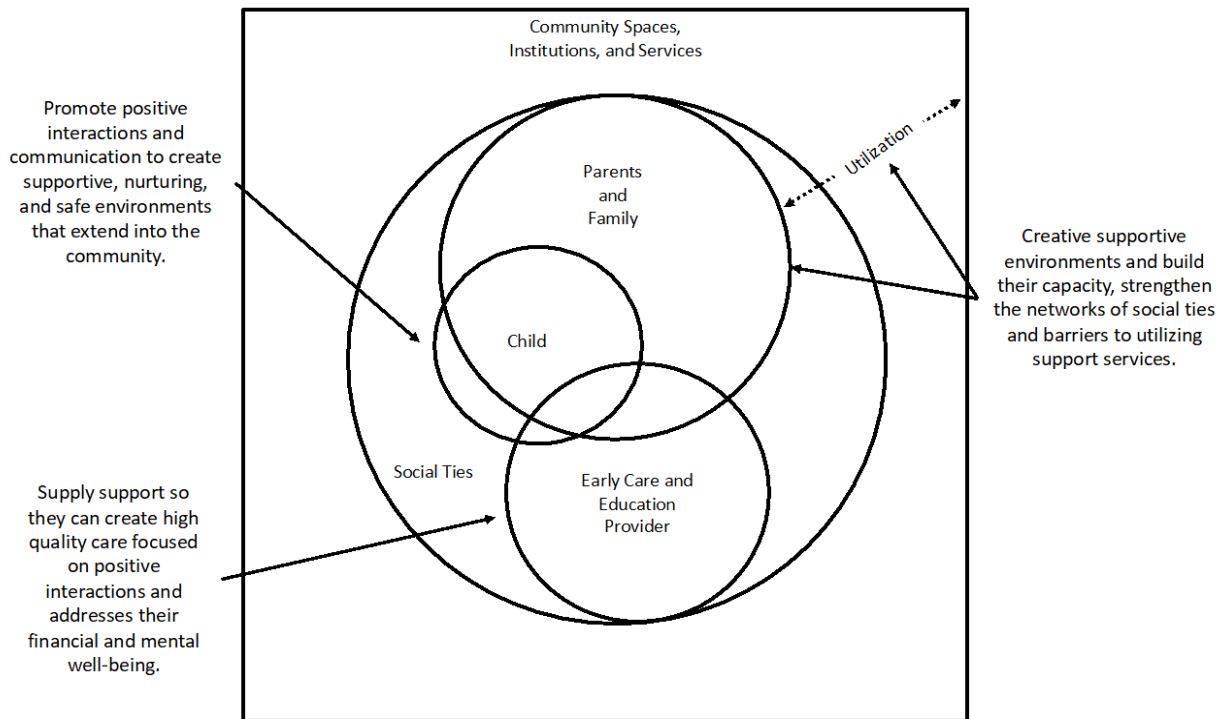


Figure 11. Model for strengthening relationships and building social capital

4.3.2.1 Supporting Children and Creating a Sense of Belonging

Young children are highly dependent upon the adults in their lives. Developing supportive and nurturing environments is arguably the most significant investment that can be made to support them. These environments translate into secure and trusting children who benefit from their social relationships and have a strong sense of belonging. Their interactions with the adults in their lives shape the quality of those supportive and nurturing environments. Unfortunately, challenges like poverty and violence too often undermine adults' ability to nurture and support young children, and a parent's history of traumatic experience. In addition to the direct relationships children form with adults, they also benefit from strong relationships between adults (Sampson et al., 1997).

Children learn from watching adults model positive and caring relationships and are likely to replicate in their own lives the characteristics of those positive and caring relationships. Also, children benefit from the social capital of the adults close to them by relying on a more extensive network of consistent and stable social ties.

Before meeting Ayesha, I knew about her work using theater to encourage and empower women. We were introduced because she is the mother of a young child and also a grandmother, a therapist, a student, and a pastor. When I asked her about developing supportive environments for children in the community, she explained that if we want to understand what children need, we need to engage with them beyond the "basics."

We don't talk to children. We just don't do it. Again, I could just usually come in, cook dinner, make sure she eats, make sure she gets her bath. Those are basics. But am I hearing her? And I think even in early childhood we will do the basics, but we don't hear them. We are not hearing what they are saying and what they are not saying. (Ayesha, Mother)

She firmly believes that our children are telling us what they need, but we are not listening. Listening to children and acknowledging them establishes an environment where they feel safe, which provides a strong foundation on which to build other essential aspects of development.

Attentive and responsive interactions with adults develop a child's sense of belonging. Young children learn through serve-and-return interactions. If I do this, I get that. When this happens, that occurs. Sometimes parents are not able to respond to their children due to their own unmet needs. Their personal experiences have shaped adults in a young child's social circle, Ayesha told me. Mothers who experienced trauma in their own lives or suffer from depression need support to help them balance their individual needs while still meeting the needs of their children. For most, it's not that parents can't feed and clothe their children, she explained. It is the emotional, or "true connection," they struggle to make. As a result, establishing supportive

environments for young children also requires investment and strategies to support the adults that care for them. I further explain those strategies in the next section about parents and families.

Consistent caring creates safety for children to learn and explore because they trust their surroundings. Debbie is the director of an early care and education center that is part of a larger community development project that creates a safe space in the community for children and families. “[Children] have to know that somebody cares about them. And if they feel they have ownership and have a sense of self-worth, then that helps them learn” she explained (Debbie, early care and education provider). Positive communication strengthens their sense of self-worth. Aquene, also an early care and education provider, pointed out that children need to realize they are capable. It is adults' responsibility to be "intentional with what and how [they] communicate with children and getting them to view themselves as, you are worth it, and you are important, and you can do this" (Aquene, Early care and education provider). These relationships need to be established outside of the home, within the broader community, as well. When children have robust networks, their sense of support can come from someone other than their parent, who may be struggling to address their own needs. Caring neighbors and friends also promote a feeling of safety and belonging for young children. “Adults need to be more visible in caring places and spaces, and ways for kids” Aquene explained to me. “Even if that is simply sitting on your porch. Like, hey are you all right?” (Aquene, Early care and education provider).

Making sure that children have the opportunity to build friendships with other children was also a concern for some Northside parents. For example, Tiffany and her son participate in many activities throughout the community. He is an only child, and she recognizes that he does not have the back-and-forth interactions with siblings which could teach him how to interact with other children and develop a strong sense of belonging. While she profoundly enjoys the time she spends

with her son, she wants to make sure that he develops the socialization skills to be successful in school. As a result, she makes sure that he spends time with his cousins and participates in community activities with other children. The role of community institutions in promoting those opportunities, and safe spaces, is discussed later in this section.

4.3.2.2 Parents and Family

Parents and family are essential in the lives of children. What is also clear is that all parents and families need support, just like their children. There are many support services available to Northside parents and families of young children. Some of the individuals I spoke with represent those services. Samantha is one those individuals. She is the Executive Director of a family-oriented service provider that offers ECE programs and a family support center. On many occasions, I have reached out to her or her staff, to ask what they view to be the best path forward for a specific family or Northside children and families in general. In each conversation their commitment to the Northside's families is undeniable. When I spoke with Samantha, she summarized what I believe to be the foundation for that commitment. She told me that all parents want to be good parents. Some just need more support than others so they can focus on being a parent. “I truly think if we take care of the parents, 90% of the time they will help take care of the kids in return and, there's less work for all of us” (Samantha, Providence Connections Executive Director).

A goal of place-based community development on the Northside is to create an environment that supports parents. Some parents and families have robust networks of extended family members, while others have neighbors, community members, and supportive services. In each case, these relationships encourage, comfort, and assist parents and families. They pass along knowledge and skills that can strengthen a parent's approach to parenting, support them to meet

the competing needs and obligations in their own lives, or identify opportunities for them and their child to participate in their community. For example, Tiffany is a single mother who works full time while she studies for her degree. She is a dedicated parent, which was evident when part of our time together was spent looking at pictures on her phone of the activities she and her son do together in the community. She also told me that she was extremely grateful for the support her mom provides to her and her sister. In addition to being a voice of encouragement, her mom helps both of them with logistics like cooking and transportation. Tiffany explained that support like this gives her the time and mental space to participate in community activities with her son and support his development. When I asked to tell me more about how she supports his development, she replied, "Getting involved myself. No, literally it's been being involved as a parent at home. At the school level. At the classroom level. And the [Head Start] policy council has been extremely integral in helping me learn about opportunities for him" (Tiffany, Parent).

Often work demands complicate if a parent can "get involved." If they are working more than one job to ensure financial stability for their children, it is difficult to consistently pick up a child from care, let alone participate in parent organizations and learning programs. For the families with whom Samantha works on the Northside, the primary concern is "surviving" by meeting the physiological needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter) that are the foundation to Maslow's pyramid of needs (Maslow, 1943). "They're not looking at, well is this the best school district? Are there parks nearby?" (Samantha, Providence Connections Executive Director). Instead, they are thinking about how to feed and clothe their child and keep a roof over their heads.

In some cases, families can rely on relatives or community members to address their basic needs. If families don't have strong social ties, organizations and agencies often are surrogates. These service providers work to meet a family's basic needs. If they don't have enough to eat, they

provide food. If they can't pay their bills, they assist with the payments. The family support network is designed to help families who need additional assistance and provide parents with the know-how and encouragement to be the type of parent they want to be. However, Samantha points out there needs to be a focus on the future of families as well. Families need help now, but it is just as important to ask, "[H]ow can we prevent this from happening in the future? What's the game plan? Because if we just keep coming in and being the superhero to solve the problem, we're not solving the problem or improving our long-term life" (Samantha, Providence Connections Executive Director). To her point, work with families on the Northside must encompass more than service delivery. It must also build the capacity of parents and families to steer their lives in the direction they feel is best.

Getting information to parents and families, whether it is about goal planning or bonding with their children, is an important first step. For Rev. Gregg and Debbie, two individuals who had been working with Northside families the longest, how to do that was an important topic. The adage, there isn't a book to tell you how to parent, is not true. There are thousands of books, and even more information available on the internet. However, Rev. Gregg believes we need to translate that information "down to the level of a parent understanding how early child care can make a big difference in their child's life" (Rev. Gregg, Project Destiny Executive Director). She envisions a Northside campaign that explains to parents in simple terms and accessible language the science behind their child's development. She believes that the message is powerful and would help parents realize how important they are to their child's development and how ECE programs support both the parents and the child. The message needs to be expressed in a way that is likely to reach parents and families.

Both Debbie and Rev. Gregg agree that how the message is conveyed matters. As a life-long early childhood educator, Debbie understands that the tremendous influence parents have on their children comes from "the little things" they do. You don't "need a Ph.D. in early childhood" to raise healthy children, she told me, but parents don't realize that. More importantly, they don't realize they can do it. The support parents need to realize their potential comes from a trusted messenger who transmits encouragement and information through modeling. "They need to be exposed," Debbie explained, "and it has to come from someone where they don't feel threatened" (Debbie, Early care and education provider).

In many cases, the trusted relationship is with a family member. In other cases, the individual is a community member with whom the parent can relate. Another trusted relationship for parents is with the ECE providers who care for their children. Similar to the views expressed by Homewood stakeholders, Northsiders identified the dual role of the neighborhoods ECE providers as caregivers for children and mentors for parents as an asset in the lives of children and their families. I discuss their role in supporting and brokering resources to parents in the section that follows.

Nearly everyone I spoke with advocated for more and better services to support families. However, a couple highlighted the potential long-term impact that continued assistance can have. Both Samantha and Ayesha, who have backgrounds in providing family support services, expressed their fear that continued assistance would diminish a family's ability to develop further and strengthen their capacity to function on their own. Ayesha explained further. For her, each person is "innately wired" to succeed and to "know what to do for one another." The result of well-intentioned assistance programs is that they have done too much. They have "stripped the

community of its own natural ability to function and thrive on its own (...) We smother, stifle out the natural stuff that is there and add these artificial things" (Ayesha, Northside Parent). While the "artificial" bonds Ayesha mentions provide needed support, her comments highlight that communities are a collection of social bonds and an over-dependence on surrogate ties can cause the weakened bonds that a family does have to atrophy to the point that they no longer function. Her comments also reinforce that at the core of place-based community development is building social ties, within and between families, and within the community. In addition to creating an understanding of child development, the work of One Northside is also about cultivating the ties that strengthen a family's, or a community's, ability to enact what they are "innately wired" to "know what to do for one another."

A final comment should be made regarding supporting parents and families. As I mentioned above, parents and families need and benefit from support services. While some run the risk of becoming overdependent on them, too many families fail to utilize the services available. There are many reasons as to why a family chooses or is unable to use a service. Most of the time they are unique to each family's situation at the time. However, one view expressed by stakeholders stood out to me. There is a tremendous power differential in the relationship between families and social service providers, and many families are fearful that the power of the agency or organization will be used against them. This is particularly the case with African American families who too often are impacted by abuses within the system that single them out for aggressive interventions. When I spoke with Rev. Gregg, she shared that traditionally in the African American community the "natural resources" of family and friends took care of the children and provided support to parents. Too often the destruction of those natural resources occurred as a result of social, economic, and political intervention. In situations when a family does not have sufficient

"natural resources," many families are reluctant to access the resources from organizations that would benefit them. Rev. Gregg went on to say that if a member had gone through any abuse or maltreatment, they were afraid of the system of supports. These sentiments remain strong, especially in communities who witness violence and abuse by law enforcement. As a result, the network of supports is walled off from the community members. In addition to building the social ties within and between families, place-based community development on the Northside requires that trust is established between families, and the organizations and agencies designed to support them.

4.3.2.3 Early Care and Education Programs

One Northside is working to build strong ties with early care and education providers, and between them. The Early Childhood Core Team is the conduit to making that happen. The team supports the ability of providers to develop relationships that assist them in providing high quality care to children and support to parents. Despite widespread attempts from state and local level initiatives to build high quality early care and education experiences, the quality of programs in Pennsylvania and the Northside lags behind theoretical and practical knowledge (see Table 4). The emphasis of One Northside's early childhood focus and a significant component of my role on the Northside as a representative of Trying Together is to bridge that gap and ensure that early care and education programs provide the highest quality care possible. ECE quality is broken down into structural and process quality (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). A simple distinction between the two is that structural quality refers to the regulatable characteristics of the programs such as staff to child ratio, working conditions, staff credentials. Process quality refers to how a child experiences the program and focuses on the social, emotional, and instructional aspects of the programs. Parents want their children to be safe when they are unable to care for them, and they

want their children to experience warm and positive interactions with their caregivers. However, structural factors such as affordability, location, and hours of operation, as well as parents' beliefs about the appropriate care setting, impact parents' ability to choose the types of experiences they want for their young children to have while in an ECE program. The participants whom I spoke with did not share a great deal of information about structural factors. Instead, they identified the program characteristics they believe to be most important for their child's healthy growth and development (see Table 6).

Table 6. Program characteristics of high quality early care and education programs

Characteristic	Stakeholder responses
High academic standards	Tiffany wants her son to be challenged. "I want him to be competitive with not only the other students in his classroom but regionally, you know, on a state level and beyond." That goal is reflected in her wish that early childhood education "sets the standard or sets the bar for kids. Establishing routine. Some discipline, social interaction, homework."
	For Aquene, a former high school teacher, she wants to set the bar high as well, by having high expectations because, as a teacher, she saw the accumulated deficiencies of low expectations.
Positive identity	Ayeshah reflected on her daughter's experience in care and sees the most value in her child developing trust in other adults, and learning to interact with her peers in an environment that "cultivates what is already in her." The result is that she and her husband see a "secure child."
Life skills and moral development	Brenda refers to her work as cultivating and nurturing an "appropriate child" by teaching "life skills" and helping children understand what is "right and wrong."
A sense of belonging and expanded worldview	For Debbie, in addition to establishing a sense of belonging, programs broaden the sense of belonging to the larger world by expanding children's familiarity. Children should "know there is something beyond yourself (...) you have to know that you are part of something bigger." Exposure and belonging are the foundation for future academic growth.
Self-regulation	Both Brenda and Aquene see self-regulation as important. Believe children need to learn how to "sit still" and "maintain themselves." Aquene sees this as a misunderstanding and misuse of play-based curricula where "learning was running around and exploring things all day long," and results in children being misdiagnosed with ADHD when they enter school.

The variety of characteristics Northside stakeholders identified is consistent with the literature on how families make child care decisions (Forry, Tout, Rothenbert, Sandstrom, & Vesely, 2013). Relationships and social ties are just as crucial in the decision-making process. Most parents begin the decision-making process based on information they get from their closest relationships, family, and friends (Pungello & Kurtz-Costes, 1999). Families also need to trust the person who is going to take care of their young child. Before other features are considered, trust is required (Mensing, French, Fuller, & Kagan, 2000). Samantha shared that when trust between early care and education providers and parents is present, it creates nurturing environments for children and parents. These "safe spaces" are important because "parents and kids can come in the door and breathe. They know that they can leave the baggage outside and they can come in here and focus on being a family or they can focus on being a kid" (Samantha, Community Leader).

The ties between home-based providers and families are quite strong. They work incredibly close with their families and often take on the role of an extended family member. Brenda, a home-based provider in the community, sees parents who don't always benefit from the support typically provided by the extended family. She shared with me the story of a mother who needed extra help and was not getting it from her family.

One young lady was stressed out, so I told her, bring the baby back. It doesn't have to be daycare time. I will give you service, I will give you some time for yourself. And she started crying. I thought that I had offended her or made her feel bad. She said nobody in my family ever said anything to me like that. I'm stressed out. (Brenda, Early care and education provider)

Early care and education providers develop strong bonds with children. They also develop strong relationships with parents. These relationships offer emotional support and information about child-raising from someone the parent trusts. Brenda shared that it is not uncommon for her to have a parent come in and "they may have something they want to discuss with me, personal or

child-related, and I try to extend myself to the best of my abilities" (Brenda, Early care and education provider). To her, it is merely part of the job she feels called to do.

Early care and education providers also assist parents in developing relationships with support services. They act as "resource brokers," and use their formal and informal connections to introduce families to community resources (Small, 2006). Parents trust them and therefore are open to their suggestions. Establishing relationships with parents that can result in brokering resources is an important focus of Aquene's work planning a high quality early care and education program. She hopes to establish an atmosphere where families view her and know, "that I really do mean whatever you need. Even if it is to say hey our electricity might be getting cut off. Do you have any resources that we might be able to utilize?" (Aquene, Early care and education provider). To be a successful broker of resources, child care providers need ties to resources, or at least know whom to call. Facilitating relationship building with those services providers bolsters the care Northside ECE programs provide, which in return supports the healthy development of Northside children and their families.

Working with families is challenging and draining on the professionals who do it day in and day out. "[F]ortunately I have a good support system. I have people that when I'm burned out (...) if I called them and said I'm really stressed out they will say I will come over," Brenda told me. It is not safe to assume that all providers have robust support systems. Moreover, asking them to take on one more responsibility, like acting as resource brokers, could be too much.

Compensation levels for ECE providers are abysmal. A current study conducted by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (Whitebook, McLean, & Austin, 2016) found that the median wage for early care and education providers declined in the last five years and that 43% of them in Pennsylvania utilize public support programs. The stress of working with families in

challenging situations coupled with continued financial instability is taking its toll on the early care and education community. Consequently, early care and education providers frequently burnout after a short time and turnover rates are incredibly high. Evidence suggests that these stress levels are negatively impacting their ability to function in their job and provide high quality care (Cummings, 2017). Just as parents need a robust network, so do the providers who care for the community's young children. The ECE community needs strategies and support to address their financial and mental well-being.

4.3.2.4 Community Spaces, Institutions, and Resources

Young children benefit from supportive, nurturing, and safe environments throughout the community. Children's learning is accelerated by opportunities to participate in engaging educational activities at home and in the community. The Northside is home to some of the region's most cherished museums and cultural institutions with early childhood related programs and exhibits. Because of their location, they could be neighborhood assets for Northside residents. They are places where children learn and are challenged, where families can interact with their children and other families, and where providers can gather to co-create formative experiences for young children. However, stakeholders expressed concern that these institutions and spaces are not accessible to all Northside children and families.

Museums are rich experiences for young children to play and explore. For Wendy, the Early Childhood Coordinator at the Carnegie Science Center, the museum should be a welcoming place for children and families to learn together through curiosity. For parents, she believes that an emphasis on STEM will help parents better understand their children, and learn to follow their child's explorative curiosity and the powerful learning that occurs during the small moments. As much as the Science Center is a place for children to feel they belong, Wendy hopes that the

renovations will also create a sense of belonging for parents. “We want them to feel supported and feel comfortable and feel like they're doing something good for their kids. And the kids are going to get something educational out of this,” (Wendy, Carnegie Science Center Early Childhood Coordinator). She acknowledges that many low- and middle-income communities do not utilize the museum. It is a concern for all museums, not only those in Pittsburgh. Specific to the Northside, she doesn't think that the questions of why should focus on how to market the program in those communities better. Instead, she thinks the question should focus on, "why are they not seeing the Science Center as a place they can come, or they should come, or that they feel comfortable coming?" (Wendy, Carnegie Science Center Early Childhood Coordinator). Her conversations with community members tell her that families often question if the museum a place they will be welcome at, they will be understood, or they will be engaged in ways that interest them.

That sense of belonging was an essential theme of my conversation with Debbie. While the entrance fee and other costs associated with a visit are indeed an issue, giving families funding to attend the museum would not address what Debbie feels is the underlying issue, a sense of belonging and race. While Wendy sees the relationship between community members in terms of bridging ties that connect two different social groups, Debbie perceives a hierarchy of power between residents in low-income communities and museums that is better understood through the lens of linking capital (Woolcock, 2001). Debbie explains that the knowledge base and social norms are foreign to many families in the community.

“To take your child to the Science Center, you have to have a sense of confidence just walking in the door. It is such a foreign thing to you. You don't know how to navigate in that environment. What do you do when you get there? Where do you go? So you have to have some sort of knowledge to even navigate in that environment. (Debbie, Early Childhood Educator)

To break down the feeling that museums are “not for us,” race has to be addressed. Debbie grew up in what she described to be a predominantly white working-class neighborhood, which she feels helps her to feel more comfortable around white people than other African Americans she knows. In our conversation, she spoke freely about the impact of race in her own life, and the families with whom she works. As a person of color, Debbie feels that she is limited to places she feels will treat her fairly. She points out that to take your child to these locations, you have to feel safe there and believe you belong. None of this makes the claim that cultural institutions on the Northside opening discriminate. However, it calls attention to them not being perceived as community hubs where individuals of different background interact. Instead, many parents on the Northside do not feel safe, physically and mentally, in these locations because of race. Debbie goes on further to explain that it is not often a topic discussed in relation to young children. However, it is "part of dealing with young children and taking them places that will expose them to certain things they haven't experienced. But you're very cautious about taking them there because you don't know how you're going to be received" (Debbie, Early Childhood Educator).

Throughout history, in the United States, the religious community has played an essential role in early childhood by providing child care services to families, and support to mothers. The Northside is not different. With that in mind, I was surprised during my conversations with stakeholders that the role of churches and community did not come up more often, especially since the Early Childhood Pillar Team is lead by Reverends of Northside churches. An exception was shared by Ayeshah, who described an occurrence at a church gathering when her daughter expressed that she wanted to pray for two boys in her peer circle. Although Ayeshah's intention by sharing the story was not to comment on spiritual development, it did force me to think about the role of spiritual growth in child development. The church community models caring attitudes and

relationships to children, and also builds their sense of trust and belonging. However, the child's act of prayer suggested the possibility that being involved in the religious community promoted empathy for the two other boys.

Involvement in the religious community also extends the child's sphere of caring relationships to a larger group of adults. The faith-based community can also act as a surrogate in times when the family needs additional support. For example, Rev. Homitsky shared examples of how children's "faith line" extends their "bloodline" through encouragement, mentoring, and social excursions with caring adults. The church community cannot replace the family, but it can certainly compensate. It also affirms young children as valued members and contributors in the community. In my conversation with Rev. Homitisky, he argued that the church community affirms young children by acknowledging them during important church rituals, like children's sermon. He also shared a recent example of how the church congregation rallied around its children to support and celebrate their fundraising accomplishments to help a local cause.

4.3.3 Summary and Discussion

The scope of the One Northside movement is broad. It covers a large portion of land with a considerable amount of people and focuses on five topic areas. The guiding frame that undergirds the work is to connect all of the 18 Northside neighborhoods into one Northside community. With that as the foundation, the movement is about strengthening relationships. It is about building natural support networks between residents, and connecting residents in need of more formalized support to beneficial support services. It is about joining organizations through partnerships to improve and strengthen a neighborhood system. And, it is about establishing connections between

the One Northside movement and additional resources to focus those resources on Northside residents.

The common goals of the work are the result of attentive listening to community stakeholders about their needs and their aspirations for their community. For early childhood, that goal is to increase access to high quality early care and education. The strategies to accomplish each of the three components of that goal (i.e., pre-K enrollment, affordable early care and education, and high quality early care and education programs) rely on effectively using resources that exist both inside and outside of the community. Although Buhl's investment in the community is catalytic, their financial resources to drive the work are not as substantial as other place-based community development initiatives. Consequently, a primary component of their work is to develop a framework that harnesses the potential of collaboration and partnership to access the additional resources needed to accomplish the initiative's goals. Within that framework, One Northside's Early Childhood Pillar Team is supporting early care and education providers through professional development and relationship building.

While relationship building establishes the foundation for the early childhood on the Northside, it is not an end in itself. Moving forward, the initiative will need to translate those relationships into improved quality of early care and education experiences for children and families, which will take resources and coordination with local and state agencies. A focus of the resources and coordination will need to be the Northside's early care and education workforce. Until the early care and education field can provide life-sustaining wages, the quality of care will continue to be hindered by high turnover rates of staff and a workforce that is constantly fatigued by the stress of consistent financial instability. The additional revenue needed to increase the wages and benefits cannot come from parents and families who are already contributing the maximum

amount they can spend. It also cannot come from place-based community development initiatives, like One Northside. While they may be able to provide a short-term investment, they cannot sustain the investment. The additional financing will have to come from the public sector, or a public sector partnership with private organizations (e.g., business, philanthropy). A potential role for One Northside that it has not yet played is that of early childhood advocate. Although One Northside is unable to increase wages, it can leverage its relationships with the early childhood community and political, business, and community leaders to promote investment. As an advocate One Northside can share the experiences of Northside residents and early care and education providers to influence system-level interventions to support the healthy development of young children.

The framing of early childhood articulated by the Northside's early childhood stakeholders is broader than investing in the community's early care and education providers. It includes establishing safe, nurturing, and caring environments for young children, which means investing in the adults that interact with them in those environments. To that end, the parents and families of Northside children need support. They need access to information and networks that will strengthen their ability to form strong bonds with their children. To date, One Northside has not placed much emphasis on parents, partly because working with families is complex and intensive and requires a substantial investment of time and resources. However, the community's family support centers are equipped to do this work. They are designed to work within the unique dynamics of each family and connect the family and the community's physical, economic, and service infrastructure. They are also staffed by community members who have lived experiences in common with the families in the community. However, they are only able to serve a relatively small number of families effectively, and families must request support directly from the family

support center. To generate a community-level impact, they will need additional resources to expand the number of families they serve. They will also need the assistance of informal networks within the community and to encourage families to utilize the supports offered by the family support center.

A strong focus on parents does turn attention away from other community aspects that impact child development. The Northside's early care and education providers identified a high number of children they serve in need of additional early childhood mental health services. Some early care and education providers and the support services designed to support them are working at capacity and not able to respond to all of the requests they receive. Increased integration of services that focus directly on young children is needed. A likely first step is working toward universal developmental screening for all of the Northside's young children.

Complex place-based community development strategies rely on anchor organizations to serve as the project lead for its key initiatives. There are indeed organizations on the Northside that are essential to the early care and education strategy. However, those organizations do not serve as an anchor. For example, the Co-Chairs of the Early Childhood Pillar Team each operate their organizations, but those organizations do not administer One Northside's early childhood resources. Instead, Trying Together, which is a consultant and not physically located in the Northside community, assumes the financial responsibility for the work. To a great extent, the Buhl Foundation acts as the anchor organization of the initiative. From their position, they can see a broader perspective of the work and make connections across the initiative's focus areas. In addition, they are in a position to leverage their relationships to direct outside resources to community residents. However, if the Buhl Foundation is acting as the anchor organization, the role of the Early Childhood Pillar Team to drive the initiative and develop community leadership

is reduced. There should come a time shortly when the Buhl foundation steps aside and uses its resources to create the space needed for a community-based organization, or partnership of community-based organizations, on the Northside to assume the role of anchor organization.

5.0 Conclusion

The purpose of my study is to understand better how early childhood is framed within the context of place-based community development initiatives. In the previous chapters, I examined two place-based community development initiatives and described how they frame their specific early childhood strategies within the context of the initiative. I also detailed the frames utilized by the early childhood stakeholders of those initiatives. For each initiative I created a model, based on those frames, to describe my contextualized understanding of early childhood in Homewood and the collective neighborhoods of the Northside. In this final chapter, I summarize how each place-based community development initiative reflects the local context of the neighborhood, the physical spaces, community assets, and the people of each community. I also present a revised model that is informed by the models for Homewood and the Northside described in Chapter 4 of my study. Based on the revised model, I discuss the significance of the research and examine key considerations and areas for future action. To conclude, I present my study's theoretical and methodological contributions.

5.1 Discussion of Research Findings

In the previous chapters of my study I presented what the early childhood community stakeholders of Homewood and the Northside view as the issues for young children's well-being and development, and the opportunities for community members to contribute to a shared vision to address them. In Homewood, key organizations are working to develop a cradle to career

pipeline for the neighborhood's children. Although a great deal of collaboration building remains, stakeholders are hoping to establish "transformative" partnerships that support children and families along the pipeline toward the ultimate goals of academic success, high school graduation, and employment. Within that framework, early childhood is one section of the pipeline. It marks the beginning of the journey and the role of early care and education programs is to establish a strong start for children so they enter into the next segment of the pipeline ready for kindergarten. To that end, community organizations are partnering to support the community's early care and education providers and to better coordinate support services and resources for young children and their families. Undergirding that work is a common early childhood frame that for the neighborhood's children to be successful in life they need to develop secure attachments with the adults in their lives. The stakeholders with whom I spoke identified the role of environmental factors in the community that influence attachment. The work of the community is to address the environmental factors and to support the adults in the lives of Homewood's children so they can effectively act as mediators and moderators of the environmental factors.

On the Northside, the Buhl Foundation is acting as the catalyst for a community-driven movement to unify the 18 neighborhoods of the Northside. Via its embedded position in the community, Buhl is attempting to strengthen natural support networks and connect residents in need of more formalized support to beneficial services. It is also working to promote partnership and collaboration between organizations, inside and outside of the community, to improve and strengthen the neighborhood system. Whereas the Homewood initiative sees early childhood as a segment of a larger progression of the community's children, the One Northside movement sees early childhood as a Pillar that supports the building of a healthy community. For the community's stakeholders, early childhood is framed in terms of investment to create safe and nurturing

environments for the Northside's young children. Consequently, supporting parents and families so they can focus on developing strong relationships with their children is a primary concern of the stakeholders. So are the Northside's early care and education providers who are viewed to be necessary for the success of both young children and parents. In many cases, providers have developed a strong and trusting relationship with parents. As a result, they can address some of a family's utilization barriers and broker the resources and supports many families need.

Despite different organizational structures in each of the case studies, there are consistencies in the frames expressed by the broader place-based community development initiative and the stakeholders of each initiative. In the following sections, I present a revised model (see Figure 12) of early childhood framing that goes beyond "pipelines" and "pillars." The revised model incorporates a synthesized understanding that I developed from the two case sites and includes critical elements that I believe are needed to support young children and families effectively. I individually examine each of the key elements in the sections that follow. To orient that examination, I first need to highlight a few key characteristics of the revised model.

- The child is the impetus for the work and therefore at the center of the model. The model also locates children in the context of the adults that primarily care for them (e.g., parents and family, early care education providers). Dashed lines represent those adults and signify how they mediate and moderate environmental factors on the child.
- Surrounding the child, parents, and family, and early care and education providers is a dashed line representing the social ties these groups have with each other, and the broader community (e.g., people, organizations, and institutions). Those ties represent the collective support network for those groups which helps to mediate

and moderate the impact of environmental factors.

- The boxes represent the initiatives, organizations, institutions, and infrastructure that support young children and their families on the exterior of the model. The arrows connecting them symbolize the different types of partnerships that join them together and build the system of supports that can strengthen the individual's and the community's abilities to determine their futures.

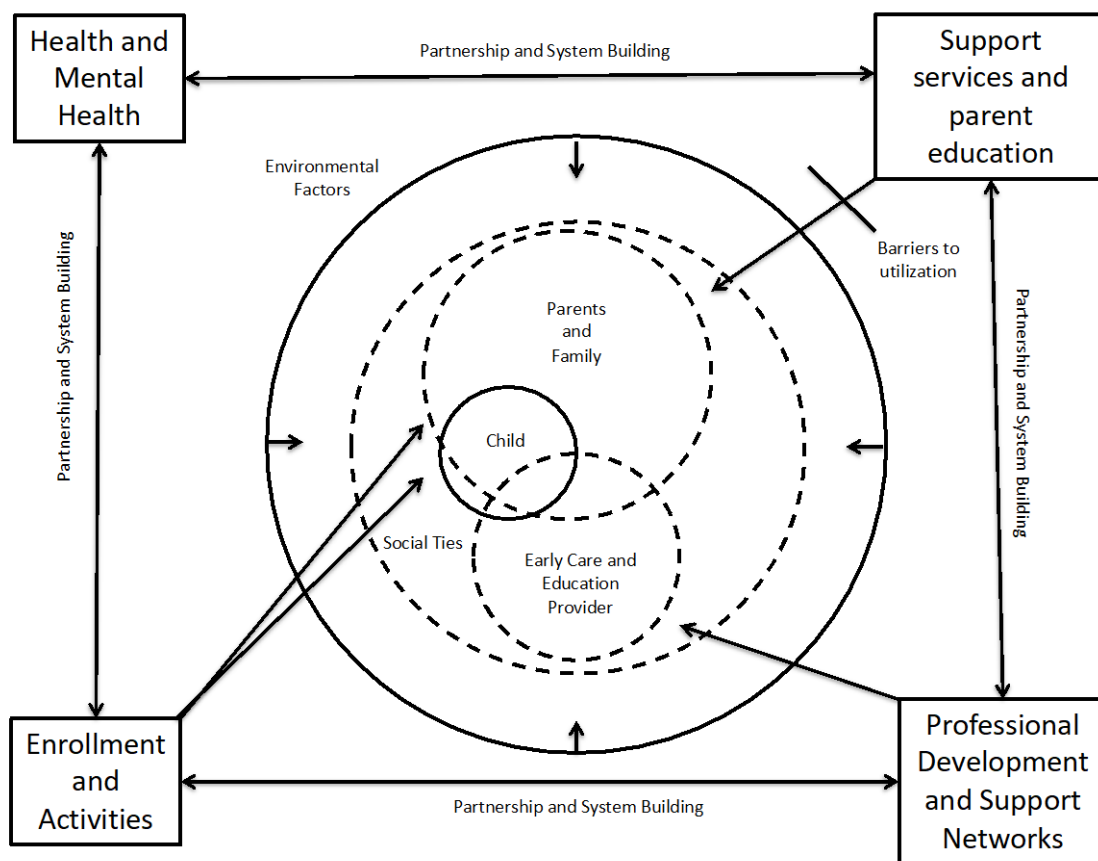


Figure 12. Revised model of stakeholders' early childhood framing

5.1.1 Child

Within the context of place-based community development approaches, children and families are just one part of the broader strategy to impact community change. The predominant framing of early childhood by stakeholders is that we serve children best by establishing safe and nurturing environments that are characterized by consistent and caring relationships. These responsive relationships promote strong attachments between children and the adults in their lives and foster a sense of psychological security which is the foundation for future development in school and life. Despite this framing, the primary strategy is not to directly invest in young children. Instead, the approach is to direct investment at the primary adults in a young child's life. Although young children are the intended beneficiary of the early childhood strategies of the initiatives, those benefits are passed on to the child via more significant investment in parents and family, and the community's early care and education providers. For example, young children, their family members, and the early care and education providers who care for them are vulnerable to the environmental factors present in the community. At times these environmental factors interact directly with young children. In most cases, the factors directly impact the adults, who then pass down the impact on the young child. Investing in the adults serves to strengthen their ability to address the elements in their own lives and to act as mediators and moderators of the environmental factors on their children.

When direct investment in children is mentioned, there are two areas of focus. The first is enrollment in early care and education programs, most often pre-kindergarten. Most stakeholders understand the short- and long-term impact of pre-kindergarten on success in school and life. Increasing access to pre-kindergarten program would undoubtedly have a positive effect on the children and families in each of the communities. However, generating sustainable funding to

provide programming is costly, and most likely beyond the ability of the organizations involved. Also, a pure focus on pre-kindergarten overlooks the importance of high quality early care and education programs for younger children. If place-based community development initiatives are interested in directly investing in early care and education programs for children, it would be wise to target programs that serve younger children or children with special needs or programs that provide high quality care outside of the traditional hours of care. The other direct investment identified by stakeholders is participation in out-of-home learning activities and programs (e.g., early literacy groups, programming sponsored by cultural institutions). These types of programs are a response to a deficit perspective of childhood experiences in these communities, which are perceived to address common characteristics of an idealized childhood or insufficient vocabulary acquisition. With that said, they also have an ancillary benefit. Bringing groups of young children and families together serve as an opportunity to build social ties between families thereby strengthening their ability to parent.

5.1.2 Parents and Family

Stakeholders of the two initiatives believe that parents and families are the most critical factors in promoting healthy child development. Parent and child well-being are inextricably linked. It is the primary caregiver's responsibility to moderate external influences by creating warm and caring environments for their children. However, stakeholders believe that parents either lack the necessary skills and knowledge to appropriately care for their children or are unable to care for them because of stress factors in their lives, such as family economics or personal histories.

Stakeholders believe that parents rely on how they were treated by their parents to determine if they are properly parenting. A different reference point is needed for parents raised

in the midst of dysfunction. Working with parents to change their perception of what they want for their children requires a substantial investment in time and energy. Some stakeholders believe that the investment should be spent on educating parents on how their actions influence their child's development and the why behind it. They think parents need to understand the underlying developmental processes that are at work when they take a specific action. Other stakeholders believed that why is not a necessary prerequisite for positive parenting. Instead, they think parents already have what is needed to make powerful connections during simple everyday interactions. For the last group, the investment should focus on supporting parents to address the obstacles that limit their ability to interact with their children positively.

In some cases, support comes from family members. When that is not an option, parents and families rely on their social ties with neighbors or friends to provide them with assistance. In situations when relying on familial and communal relations is not an option, or a family needs additional help, adequately addressing their complex needs requires establishing connections with numerous services. Each of the initiatives is attempting to improve via coordination the system of services and how parents and families access them. While improvement is necessary, stakeholders reported that even if families connect to supportive services, many are slow to utilize them. They shared that a parent or family's history of interaction with these supports may have been abusive or damaging and therefore families are hesitant, if not fearful, to interact with service providers who could be a benefit to them. It should also be noted that stakeholders contend that support services are artificial and temporary supports. Increased connection to them strips away the community's ability to support each other organically. They argue that a characteristic of a healthy community is the strong natural bonds between residents. On behalf of children, place-based community development should promote strengthening those bonds.

5.1.3 Early Care and Education Providers

Although neither of the initiatives focused on directly enrolling children in early care and education programs, they are each implementing strategies to improve the quality of the community's programs. This is primarily through access to professional development that is designed via provider engagement and needs assessments. Investing in the early care and education workforce is shown to be one of the most effective strategies to improve practice and the quality of a program. Early care and education providers are required to participate in a set number of professional development hours each year. Covering the cost of those hours by providing courses that directly respond to what they identified as essential needs is indeed a benefit to them. However, there is little ability to translate those hours into certified coursework that accumulates into certification or a post-secondary degree. Furthermore, increasing their knowledge and skills may not be addressing core issues that impact their ability to provide high quality care.

The biggest obstacle the early care and education field confronts is the lack of adequate funding. Compensation for providers is so low that many in the field rely on public support to be financially stable. The cost to families to send their child to care is extremely high and prohibits many from accessing high quality arrangements for their children or moving their child between programs in an attempt to locate a program they can afford. In cases where families are eligible to utilize child care subsidies, the rate of reimbursement is substantially below the actual cost of high quality care. The result is underfunded programs that pay low wages, have a substantial turnover of staff and children, and are unable to invest in high quality materials and experiences for the children they serve. These factors often create less than ideal environments for young children.

Creating supportive networks for providers is one proposed solution. In some cases, it involves focusing resources that, up until now, have not been targeted to early care and education

programs or viewed by the field as a resource (e.g., small business supports). In other cases, early care and education programs are trying shared-service models that divide the cost of essential services over a group of programs. However, any contractual agreement requires tremendous trust between the organizations involved and developing that trust requires time. Although shared-services are a strategy to utilize limited resources effectively, they do not address the core issue of the lack of adequate funding.

Stakeholders shared that childcare providers do more than support the children in their care. They also can assist families with knowledge about parenting strategies and help them through difficult times. Although less common, some providers connect families to additional resources and services. They develop trusted relationships with parents, which can be utilized to break down the utilization barriers previously mentioned. A promising strategy is to build on the trust providers have with parents in the hope that parents are willing to utilize a support service because the suggestion and explanation of the support came from a trusted source.

5.1.4 Health and Mental Health

An element missing from each of the initiatives is the physical and psychological health of young children. Stakeholders acknowledged the need for mental health services for parents and early care and education professionals. However, it surprised me not to see it identified as a critical element of healthy development in the current implementation of programming considering that both communities have relatively high levels of low birth weight and preterm births (Zuberi, Hopkinson, Gradeck, & Duck, 2015). Expanding the focus of the initiatives to include infants and toddlers, as well as expectant and new mothers would serve to create a more comprehensive approach to children's physical, developmental, and emotional well-being. Integrating home-

visiting programs, breastfeeding support, routine screenings, and ensuring that parents develop relationships with a primary care physician are all great first steps. To do so may require a framing of early childhood that differs than the current frame of creating safe and nurturing environments. It may require a greater focus on improved access to health care, as well as a shift in cultural beliefs about mental health.

5.1.5 Collaboration and System Building

In each of the place-based community development initiatives, the scope of the work is beyond the ability of one single organization to adequately address the many factors that influence child development and well-being. Consequently, system building and bringing multiple stakeholders together to generate a collective impact for young children and families is a necessity. Within that context, there is a need for more detailed discussion about how to establish effective partnerships or integrate services. Coordinating stakeholders requires an anchor organization, or a committee of key stakeholders, to act as the foundation to an early childhood structure in the community. This structure generates opportunities for future collaboration to take root and is the point of contact for resources outside of the community to work with the community to strengthen existing efforts or address unmet needs. The structure also provides dedicated staff and resources to oversee the work and agreed upon accountability measures.

Although partnership and collaboration are essential to the success of the initiative, they are not the silver bullet for under-resourced communities and initiatives. The efforts require adequate, sustainable funding sources. Partnerships can identify areas of intersection between stakeholders where they can utilize already existing funding to serve the needs of the community collaboratively. However, the partnership can only address the issue with the resources it has. Any

value added from the relationship is not enough to cover the lack of funds to address the issue holistically. If each funded initiative represents a patch of a quilt designed to cover the community, it does not matter in what configuration you stitch the pieces together. They are not going to make a bigger quilt.

Stakeholders agree that the purpose of their work is to support the young children and families in the community. However, they struggle to translate that purpose into meaningful goals and intended outcomes that will guide the implementation of the work. Developing a theory of change models that depict how the different aspects of the work contribute to the overall goals would go a long way to developing shared responsibility and accountability for the work. Informing this work with community-level data is crucial. If stakeholders are not already collecting outcome data, they need to establish systems for generating data to monitor the progress of the program. Consistently sharing this data with stakeholder partners creates an opportunity for shared decision-making on whether or not the work should continue, be revised, or stopped.

Community-level work is part of a larger ecosystem. To be successful, the initiatives need to effectively utilize the broader system supports at the local and state level. In each initiative, there is little coordination between the early childhood strategy and the K-12 school system. There is already a shared agreement on the importance of preparing children and schools for the successful transition to kindergarten. This shared agreement could be expanded to build birth to third-grade continuums that align and standards and resources between the two siloed stages of development. It is important to highlight that some early childhood professionals fear that these continuums unintentionally push developmentally inappropriate curricula and methods into the early childhood programs in response to continuing pressure on the K-12 school system to perform well on standardized testing. Useful continuums should create a balanced approach to integration

that not only aligns early care and education programs with the K-12 system but also works to prepare K-12 schools to build on the philosophies and work of early care and education professionals

This study focused on just two neighborhoods that are benefitting from coordinated investment in early childhood strategies. There are additional neighborhoods that stand to benefit from similar approaches. Creating the means to share how these initiatives are building neighborhood level systems would strengthen the work of emerging efforts throughout the city. These neighborhood systems should be linked together to generate a more robust early childhood system at the city level. The Office of Early Childhood within Pittsburgh's Bureau of Neighborhood Empowerment and the Early Childhood Task Force represent the beginning of such a system. Representatives from neighborhoods and place-based community development initiatives should be recruited to participate in the work.

5.2 Discussion and Suggested Action Steps

In this section, I identify suggested action steps based on the revised model I presented in the previous section. The action steps serve to inform the work of place-based community development initiatives, including the two I examined in my study. The impetus for these initiatives is to transform the neighborhoods where people live and create opportunities for the people who live there to flourish. Consequently, neighborhood residents and stakeholders are working together to respond to the local context and design strategies that confront the complex challenges of their community and ensure that neighborhood residents are not just the beneficiaries of these strategies, but active participants in their design and implementation. Over the course of

my study I encountered a set of underlying issues that influence these initiatives. I discuss those considerations below. Following the discussion, I highlight the action steps that I feel would contribute to the ability of place-based community development programs to support the healthy development and well-being of young children and their families.

5.2.1 Defining the Problem

A defining factor of the communities in which place-based community development initiatives are located is that the issues they seek to address are complex and cut across many service areas. These issues interconnect in such a way that it is difficult to tease them apart and determine a clear path of action. As much as stakeholders would like to identify a key issue, or set of issues, from which the other issues are derived, the scale and intricate relationships between problems make it an impossible task. By extension, the solutions to the issues are also involved and must respond to the unique situations of a specific family or individual in the community. In response, place-based community development initiatives are crafting strategies that bring together representatives from various services areas. Theoretically, the approach would not attempt to disaggregate the issues. Instead, it would provide support in all of the areas and those in need would use them accordingly. However, for collaboration to be effective, the partner organizations and service areas need to develop a common understanding of the issues they are working to address. Identifying a shared definition of the problem establishes a common focal point, as well as a stopping point of work. When the initiatives see that the characteristics of the issues, as they defined them, are changed, it can move on to the next phase of the strategy. Without that common understanding, the stakeholders run the risk of aimlessly investing their resources without an idea of their impact. Strategic decisions must be made to develop that understanding. Via that process,

specific issues are elevated while others put to the aside. Simply stated, stakeholders are deciding which issues, and which people, are most important and therefore should be the primary focus of the current work.

5.2.2 Acknowledging Time

Time is an essential consideration of place-based community development initiatives. In each of the case sites I examined, stakeholders are trying to address time by extending their involvement in the community. The hope is that extending time allows for the investment to mature and for the community to see the long-term impact. Extending the time frame of the investment also provides for the strategies to be flexible and adapt to a changing understanding of the issues that confront the community. There are two additional reasons why time is an essential consideration for place-based community development initiatives. First, a reason for investing in early childhood is so children have a strong start and a healthy foundation which can reduce future problems by building children's resilience to future stress factors. The window of opportunity to make that investment is short. As a child ages the cost of the investment needed to support the child increases while the return on that investment decreases. Therefore, for each young child in the neighborhood, there is a finite amount of time to make the early childhood investment. Furthermore, the long-term benefits associated with early childhood investments take time to show up. For place-based community development initiatives to experience the benefits of investing in early childhood within their 10-20 year times frames, they need to make those investments early on in their strategy.

The second consideration regarding time pertains to the amount of time residents live in the target community. Housing instability, changing family dynamics, and the lack of adequate

employment opportunities all contribute to the high turnover of neighborhood residents, which is consequential for two reasons. The first reason is that transience in a neighborhood can lead to weaker support systems for children and parents. Trust and relationship building takes time to develop. Consistently changing neighbors erodes the social ties that promote neighborhood cohesion. As a result, lack of mutual support strains a family's ability to care for their young children, which may also increase stress levels within the family and instigate additional unhealthy practices that negatively impact child development. The second consequence of neighborhood transiency is its impact on neighborhood investment. Investing in residents that do not stay in the neighborhood complicates the theory of change that focuses on investing in a specific place. However, designing research that follows individuals who lived in the community during the time of the investment to see if they stay or move, or if they keep social ties with neighborhood residents could further develop our understanding whether or not parents' and family's social ties have to be located in the neighborhood. It would help stakeholders to understand if strong social ties with individuals that live outside of the neighborhood are just as beneficial to raising young children?

5.2.3 Determining Authority

Because the issues place-based community development initiatives addressed are involved, they require the collaboration of many individuals and groups. In some cases, a central neighborhood organization with ties to the community and history addressing the multiple issues in the community can act as the primary organization for the initiative. In Homewood and the Northside, stakeholders refer to that organization as the anchor organization. They also noted that there was not a clear organization to fill that role. In each case site, one or more organizations are convening stakeholders in an attempt to define a common agenda. It is assumed that an informal

agreement between the partners acts like the central authority. However, there is no formal structure outlining the roles and responsibilities of the participating stakeholders. Consequently, the initiatives lack a centralized authority to make decisions, assume the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the strategies, and to be accountable for results.

The role of the community is also a consideration. Ideally, the community should be the driving force of the work and oversee the contributions of the partner organizations. Each of the initiatives I studied identified community engagement as an essential component of the strategy. A great example of this is the Northside's investment in developing the Consensus Plan and continued interaction with the early care and education community. With that said, there are a couple of considerations that should be acknowledged. Too often community engagement consists of a hand-picked group of residents who speak on behalf of their community. However, neighborhood experiences widely vary, and asking representatives to speak for an entire community is unfair, at best. Furthermore, it is crucial to note resident input does not necessarily equate to resident ownership of the initiative. Real change and empowerment at the neighborhood level will occur when residents determine the direction of their neighborhoods and co-contribute to the strategies that will make it happen. Asking residents what they need is an essential first step. However, resident engagement needs to expand beyond expressing their vision for the community to include what they can contribute to realizing that vision.

5.2.4 Perpetuating the Problem

The discussion of resident engagement, ownership, and co-contribution leads to the final consideration I want to highlight. Place-based community development initiatives are doing much great work on behalf of community residents in each of the two case sites. However, in some

cases, the strategies utilized are perpetuating the problems that exist in the community. In other cases they do not, or are unable to, to address broader issues from which the local conditions stem. In this section, I discuss three considerations I believe perpetuate the problems that place-based community development initiatives are attempting to address.

The first consideration is the structure of the initiative. Structures that focus predominantly on engaging key organizations and a select group of leaders consolidate decision-making power in their hands and perpetuate unequal distribution of power. Strategies that invest in smaller community-based organizations would not only broaden the distribution of power. They would also build the neighborhood capacity needed to sustain the investments of the place-based community development initiative. However, those strategies require intensive support and the flexibility to learn from trial and error and stakeholders continuously are not always willing or able to make that investment.

The second consideration is strategies that inadvertently perpetuate issues. The issues residents face are complex and addressing one aspect of the problem may exacerbate another. For example, attempting to help a family by connecting them to support services may inadvertently weaken the family's ability to determine their future path and also act on that determination. In a different example, stakeholders may enroll a mother in a job or job placement program so she can support her family. The work she can find is during evening and weekends. In addition to increasing her level of stress because she struggles to find care options during those hours, it limits her ability to interact with her child. It also reduces the time that she can communicate with family members, neighbors, and participate in the community; all of which could increase her social ties and strengthen her ability to live the life she has determined for herself and her child.

The last consideration is the broader context. Many of the issues place-based community development initiatives are trying to address are symptoms of larger structural issues. These underlying structural issues (e.g., inequality, unemployment, systemic racism) extend beyond the neighborhoods and are entrenched in our history, society, and institutions. For example, lack of public investment in young children is influenced by long-held cultural beliefs in the United States about the roles of the family and mothers. The role of race further complicates each of these roles. Long lasting impact requires cultural shifts or fundamental changes to the structure of our society. Each is beyond the scope of the place-based community development initiative.

5.2.5 Action Steps Moving Forward

The role of the place-based community development initiative is to create environments that are fertile ground for collaboration to occur. Community-based organizations provide the on-the-ground interaction and programming with community residents. Looking at the revised model (see Figure 12) I propose an additional focus on three areas. The first is the role of early care and education providers in the place-based community development initiative. The second is on developing a better understanding of what can be done to promote the building of social ties that support healthy child development.

5.2.5.1 Early Care and Education Providers as Resource Brokers

Nearly every stakeholder with whom I spoke noted the vital role of early care and education providers in the lives of children and families. With that said, I believe their role within place-based community development initiatives is understated and underexamined. Early care and education providers spend an incredible amount of time with young children and consequently are

incredibly crucial to their development and well-being. However, their role in the lives of families and parents is understated. Early care and education providers are often a valuable resource to parents about their children and how to effectively parent them. Not only do providers know about effective parenting, but they also have developed trusting relationships with parents that often resembles that of a family member. Given the close ties between parents and early care and education providers, I see two areas for action moving forward that would support place-based community development initiatives.

The first is to develop a better understanding of the way early care and education providers support families. Family engagement is an essential topic in early childhood. However, it is often focused on strategies to bolster parent involvement in programming or extending programming and themes into the home to reinforce learning. There is little discussion regarding ways that early care and education providers help parents navigate difficult aspects of parenting. Building an understanding of how they support parents could highlight incredibly strong social ties in the community that benefits young children. Since most families do not participate in formal family support programs, this social tie could be an avenue to developing safe and nurturing home environments for more young children.

The second area for action also builds on social ties. However, it focuses on the ability of early care and education providers to broker resources within the community that would benefit families. Because of strong social ties, parents and families often reach out to providers for resources. It may include info about jobs, housing, utilities, or even domestic violence. In some cases, the early care and education provider may be one of only a few touch points for access to knowledge and resources that are critical to the family. However, providers are not able to address all the needs of a family. Instead, they could use their close ties to refer parents and families to

appropriate resources. The trust between them could be enough to increase the likelihood of a family utilizing the support services. To harness that potential, place-based community development initiatives need to design and invest in appropriate support, training, and compensation for the community's early care and education providers.

5.2.5.2 Establishing Strong Social Ties for Young Children

In previous sections of this study, I discussed how a parent or family's social ties benefit young children. I also examined the social ties between families and early care and education providers, which is often overlooked but has the potential to impact young children and their families substantially. Building on these two discussions, I believe that the second area for future action is to develop a better understanding of social ties that support healthy child development and well-being, and how place-based community development initiatives can build those ties.

The first place to look is the families themselves. Stakeholders with whom I spoke described instances in their own lives when strong social ties helped them raise their children. They also identified pockets of families within the community who have developed strong ties and raise healthy young children despite the deteriorating conditions and negative environmental pressures. For these reasons, I believe a future step is to speak with more families about their experiences raising young children. Developing an understanding of their social ties, and how those social ties impacted their ability to raise their children could identify whether some social ties are more important for young children than others. It also has the potential to highlight if there is a difference between having social ties within the neighborhood and social ties with people and groups outside of the neighborhood. Alternatively, it may identify physical and social spaces in the community that generate strong relationships. Also, it would be beneficial to examine if parents' perceptions of strong social ties are just as important as actually having them. Finally, it

would be helpful to understand how participation in public and private support programs encourages or discourages a family from developing strong ties with family members, neighbors, and friends.

It is important to note that a focus on social ties shifts the focus directly to residents and away from a systems-building approach. For that reason, I believe it is more beneficial for place-based community development initiatives to develop a better understanding of how they can create physical and social environments that are fertile ground for developing healthy social ties. This may include investing in social groups, faith-based organizations, or community celebrations that promote neighbor to neighbor interactions. The discussion may also incorporate additional areas of place-based community development, and some of the actions identified will come from focus areas of the initiatives not traditionally connected to young children. For example, planners could design physical spaces that promote opportunities for neighbors to interact and develop relationships. Alternatively, they can plan ways for families to travel through and experience their neighborhood. Also, housing strategies could focus on mechanisms that allow families with young children to stay in one place.

5.3 Significance of the Study

5.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

Place-based community development initiatives are a promising venue for early childhood development and well-being. The current systems of support and funding are concentrated at the federal and state level. To be effective, these systems must respond to the local contexts in which

young children and families live and develop. A focus of many place-based community development initiatives that address early childhood is to provide access to early care and education services for young children and to build support networks around those programs. That is not the context of the two initiatives examined in my dissertation research study. Instead, the efforts focus on developing and strengthening the local system of supports for young children, families, and early care and education providers. As the early childhood infrastructure in cities continues to develop and grow (i.e., universal pre-kindergarten), I anticipate a change in how communities work to support healthy child development. My study informs that anticipated change by elaborating how each of the communities is working to create social environments that support healthy child development. In addition, as the focus expands, and the initiatives include more stakeholders, there will be a greater need for identifying intersections that integrate services and leverage already existing funding streams.

My study confirms that the dominant framing of child development by participant stakeholders strongly focuses on the role of the family and the best way to support child development is through the creation of strong caring and nurturing relationships between children and their closest caregivers. A consequence of this frame is that it ignores other environmental factors that influence child development directly, or indirectly through the adults in their lives. It also fails to incorporate other focus areas of place-based community development initiatives that contribute to healthy child development. For example, ensuring that children live in stable housing that is free of toxins is a basic need for healthy child development. Identifying mechanisms that support families with young children to find and afford secure housing would be a huge benefit for young children and the community. Having developed a contextualized understanding of place-based community development initiatives in Pittsburgh, I now ask what other frames guide similar

work in other communities, and how could those frames inform the work in Pittsburgh. For example, what could be learned from rights-based approaches that recognize the responsibility of governing structures to ensure all residents, including young children, experience the highest quality of life? Or, how can place-based community development initiatives ensure that there are places in the social and built environments that stimulate growth and development for children through interaction with nature and the community?

5.3.2 Methodological Contributions

The study was designed to best utilize my existing relationships in each of the case sites to gain access to key stakeholders in the community and locate my findings in the broader context of the community. Consequently, study participants are limited to individuals directly connected to my network, or referred to me by someone in that network, and do not represent all of the perspectives available. In addition to generating access, my network of relationships presented challenges. My dual roles as interpretivist researcher and professional participant challenged me to consider whether my position as a stakeholder in the place-based community development influenced the responses I received. Were participants responding to me as the interpretivist researcher? Were they responding to me as a community stakeholder? I believe the answer is a blend of the two. Participants interacted with me as the person whom they had gotten to know over the previous two or more years and trust enough to share their stories. In addition to navigating my dual role in the community, I had to navigate the dual role in my professional life. The blend of functions presented tension between my responsibility to my employer to maintain strong relationships with stakeholders and my obligation as a researcher to offer an informed critical analysis.

As an interpretive researcher, I utilized a great deal of expertise to make strategic decisions about the importance of the themes I encountered. This meant that I brought with me my subjectivity to the process. In many cases my experience working with school-age children or in contexts outside of the United States allowed me to establish theoretical and empirical connections to themes not traditionally discussed in the fields of early childhood and place-based community development. With that said, there was one key issue that I felt hindered my ability to develop a contextualized understanding of the frames described by stakeholders. Except for one, the stakeholders with whom I spoke are all parents and shared with me their experiences as parents. These experiences undoubtedly influence their framing of the most critical components of an early childhood strategy. At this moment in my life, I am not a parent. My ability to relate to stakeholders on a deeper level as parents would have strengthened the rapport necessary to conduct insightful interviews as well as identify themes within our discussion that deserved more in-depth examination.

The two case sites in this study are an intricate weave of issues, decisions, and stakeholders. They are also dynamic, with strategies continually evolving. The methodological decision to use an interpretive comparative case study design created consistent opportunities to capture the context of the information I was collecting. Also, the flexibility of ethnographic methods and the iterative cycle of inquiry helped me to develop unexpected and emerging themes. As a participant observed, the act of being present in each of the communities was incredibly valuable to my understanding of the complexity of the interactions between family, community, environment, and the system of supports. With that said, because of my professional responsibilities I was more consistently present in the Northside than Homewood. While I do not believe my understanding of Homewood is inadequate to sufficiently generate insights about the framing of early childhood,

I am aware that my nuanced understanding of the Northside is informed by more robust participant observation.

I initially thought that the face-to-face semi-structured interviews would produce detached statements and phrases that resembled internal logic models. In hindsight, I realize my thinking was quite naïve. Young children and families are deeply personal. All participants, except for one, are parents. Asking them to explain to me their thinking about what a community should do to support young children and families invoked reflection of their own experience as parents and their understandings of how their children developed. While those internal logic models may exist, how participants express them is entirely different than what I expected. Participants consistently utilized life stories to answer my questions. Even participants directly involved in the cause and effect exercise of planning quickly jumped from causal explanations to life stories to illustrate their thinking. Moving forward, developing ethnographic portraits of families in each community could harness the immense power of those stories to build further a contextualized understanding of how families living in under-resourced neighborhoods raise young children. The abundance of life stories showed me that place-based community development work is profoundly human. There is a great deal of work devoted to the built environment. However, the core of the work is about people and their relationship with other people, nature, and the built environments.

Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Questions		Place-Based		Child Development				Strategies to Support Young Children		
		What is the problem?	What should be done?	Who is responsible?	What is developing?	How does it develop?	What hinders development?	What is being done?	What should be done?	Who is responsible?
1	What do you believe is the ultimate goal/strategic driver of the place-based community development initiative?	x	x							
2	What difficulties does this community face?	x	x							
3	What are the characteristics of these difficulties?	x	x							
4	What do you believe should be done to address those difficulties?		x							
5	Why should this work be done in this community?	x	x							
6	Who in the community should be involved in implementing the solutions?		x	x						
7	Do they possess certain resources and skills needed to implement the solution?	x	x	x						
8	Should children be a focus the initiative?							x		
9	Of all the areas that deserve focus, how are young children prioritized in that list?	x	x					x	x	

Questions		Place-Based		Child Development				Strategies to Support Young Children		
		What is the problem?	What should be done?	Who is responsible?	What is developing?	How does it develop?	What hinders development?	What is being done?	What should be done?	Who is responsible?
10	Does a focus on young children impact or connect to other areas/sectors of the work?	x	x							
11	What goals does the community have for their children?						x	x		
12	In what ways can a neighborhood impact the development of young children?				x	x	x			
13	How do you think this community supports young children to grow and be successful?				x	x			x	
14	What aspects of the community support the positive development of young children?					x			x	
15	What aspects hinder the positive development of young children?						x		x	
16	Can you identify places in the community that are good for children? Places that are bad for children?				x	x				
17	What are the characteristics of a community that promotes the positive development of young children?									
18	Can you explain to me what is occurring as a child grows and develops?				x	x				
19	In what areas do child develop and grow?				x	X				
20	Are any aspects of development more important than other areas?				x	x				

Questions		Place-Based		Child Development				Strategies to Support Young Children		
		What is the problem?	What should be done?	Who is responsible?	What is developing?	How does it develop?	What hinders development?	What is being done?	What should be done?	Who is responsible?
21	What areas of child development should be monitored? What milestones would you want to see?				X	X				
22	Are there things all should young children should have are experience? Why?				X	X	X			
23	Are there experiences/conditions a child should not be exposed to?						X			
24	Can you explain to me what happens when a child is exposed to that experience/condition?					X				
25	Is possible to overcome the impact of a negative experience/conditions a young child may go through?					X				
26	What factors have the greatest impact on a child's development?				X	X	X			
27	Can you share with me some examples of efforts in the community to positively impact the lives of young children?							X		
28	How does this efforts impact the well-being young children?				X	X		X	X	
29	Why is this effort important for the positive development of young children?				X	X		X	X	
30	Are there efforts you believe should be made in the community to promote the positive development of young children?				X		X		X	

Questions		Place-Based		Child Development				Strategies to Support Young Children		
		What is the problem?	What should be done?	Who is responsible?	What is developing?	How does it develop?	What hinders development?	What is being done?	What should be done?	Who is responsible?
31	How would these efforts impact the well-being children?					x			x	
32	Why is this effort important?				x	x			x	
33	Who is responsible for promoting positive child development?									x
34	What are the roles of these people/organizations?								x	x
35	What are the obstacles to a child's healthy development						x	x	x	
36	Who in the community should be involved in the work to support children? Why?									x
37	What are indications that efforts to support positive child development are succeeding?				x	x			x	

Appendix B

IRB Memorandum



University of Pittsburgh
Institutional Review Board

3500 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 383-1480
(412) 383-1508 (fax)
<http://www.irb.pitt.edu>

Memorandum

To: Chad Dorn
From: IRB Office
Date: 7/12/2017
IRB#: [PRO17020440](#)
Subject: From Neighborhoods to Neurons: A review of place-based community development strategies to support early childhood development and the frames that guide them.

The above-referenced protocol has been reviewed by the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided to the IRB, this project includes no involvement of human subjects, according to the federal regulations [§45 CFR 46.102(f)]. That is, the investigator conducting research will not obtain information about research subjects via an interaction with them, nor will the investigator obtain identifiable private information. Should that situation change, the investigator must notify the IRB immediately.

Given this determination, you may now begin your project.

Please note the following information:

- If any modifications are made to this project, use the "**Send Comments to IRB Staff**" process from the project workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the determination.
- Upon completion of your project, be sure to finalize the project by submitting a "**Study Completed**" report from the project workspace.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

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