

Systems Change Through Cross-Sector Collaboration: FYSI Social Network Analysis II

Final Report

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One of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation’s Foster Youth Strategic Initiative’s (FYSI’s) system improvement goals is to create and strengthen cross-sector coordinated efforts among grantees in Los Angeles County (LAC) and New York City (NYC). In Year 1, the evaluation team assessed this goal via grantee interviews. Interview findings confirmed that grantees were experiencing some level of success with this goal. In the spring of 2015, the evaluation team again examined changes in collaboration and cross systems alignment in FYSI grantees, but in a more quantitative way, through social network analysis (SNA). Social network analysis is used to analyze networks of relationships of any type (e.g., friendships, collaborations) and at any level (e.g., individual, organizational). It has two main purposes (or steps): (1) to create meaningful, data-based graphic representations of networks; and (2) to quantitatively describe and assess networks. As noted, the first step (SNA I) was undertaken in spring 2015; the findings are presented in the 2015 FYSI Evaluation Report. The second step (SNA II) was conducted in winter 2015, the findings of which are the focus of this report.

Brief Summary of SNA I Findings

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SNA I was implemented to assess the “reach” of the FYSI in building new and strengthening existing relationships among grantees and non-grantee organizations and agencies. Findings from SNA I showed that grantee organizations were clearly working together in a large, interconnected, network of collaborative relationships, and that the overall number of partner organizations and connections among them increased after FYSI implementation; these findings demonstrate the role FYSI has played in forging connections between grantee and non-grantee agencies and organizations over time.

SNA II was implemented to confirm connections identified in SNA I, but also to assess the functional aspects of the network using network metrics (density, centrality, and subgroup characteristics). The methods used and findings of SNA II are presented in the sections that follow.

In collaboration with a Westat social network analyst, the evaluation team developed the Grantee Social Network Analysis Survey II (Appendix) to measure the relationships grantees have created or strengthened through their involvement with the FYSI. The survey was designed to capture the nature and scope of grantees' new and existing relationships with up to ten organizations. Specifically, grantees were asked to confirm up to five existing partnerships and identify up to five new (since SNA I) organizational partners that their institution collaborated with most often to meet the goals of their FYSI grant.¹ Then, to further define the nature of their relationship with each organization, they were asked to answer two questions about the nature and frequency of their contact with existing partners, and seven questions about each new partner organization. All 33 of the grantees invited to complete the survey did so via email. In addition, all 33 grantees agreed to be identified in network graphics; as such, their names are included in the graphics presented throughout this report.

¹ Grantees funded after SNA I were asked to name up to ten existing partnerships.

Summary of Findings

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The analyses presented in this report extend the SNA I findings regarding the FYSI network in two ways: (1) the current analyses include network metrics that allow observations about the network based on statistical findings; and (2) the current analyses examine the change in the FYSI network at three time points—before implementation, at the end of Year 2, and midway through Year 3 of the FYSI. Briefly, the metrics reported here (and defined in Table 4-1) include:

- The number of organizations in the network and the number of connections between those organizations;
- The density of the network;
- Network centralization;
- Network clustering coefficient;
- Average degree centrality; and
- Average betweenness.

Table 4-1. SNA metrics defined

SNA metric	Definition
Density	Used to assess overall amount of connectivity in a network. “Density” is the number of ties that exist divided by the maximum number of ties that could exist.
Centralization	Used to assess the extent to which network connections are associated with a select few organizations in the network. These organizations would be considered “central” to the network.
Clustering Coefficient	Used to assess the extent to which organizations connect in small groups or clusters within a network. The coefficient is compared to the overall density; if it is higher than density, then clustering is occurring in the network.
Degree Centrality	“Degree” is the total number of connections associated with a given organization. “Average degree” is the average number of connections associated with organizations in a network.
Betweenness Centrality	“Betweenness” is the number of paths or connections that an organization is situated between in the network. “Average betweenness” is the average number of paths or connections that organizations are situated between in the network.

Combining the network metrics with network graphs, and examining how the networks change over time, provide a complete analysis of the FYSI network. In the sections that follow we examine: (1) the overall changes in the network; (2) the differences between the current FYSI network and the one that existed prior to FYSI; the changes in the network by region (LAC and NYC); and (3) changes in subsets of the FYSI network (i.e., changes in connections among FYSI grantees, changes in connections among grantees and public organizations, and changes in connections among grantees and private organizations). Overall, the findings show **clear evidence of network growth** over time. The network now includes new and more connections among grantees; new and more connections between grantees and partner organizations; and, overall, an increase in partner organizations.

4.1 FYSI Network Over Time

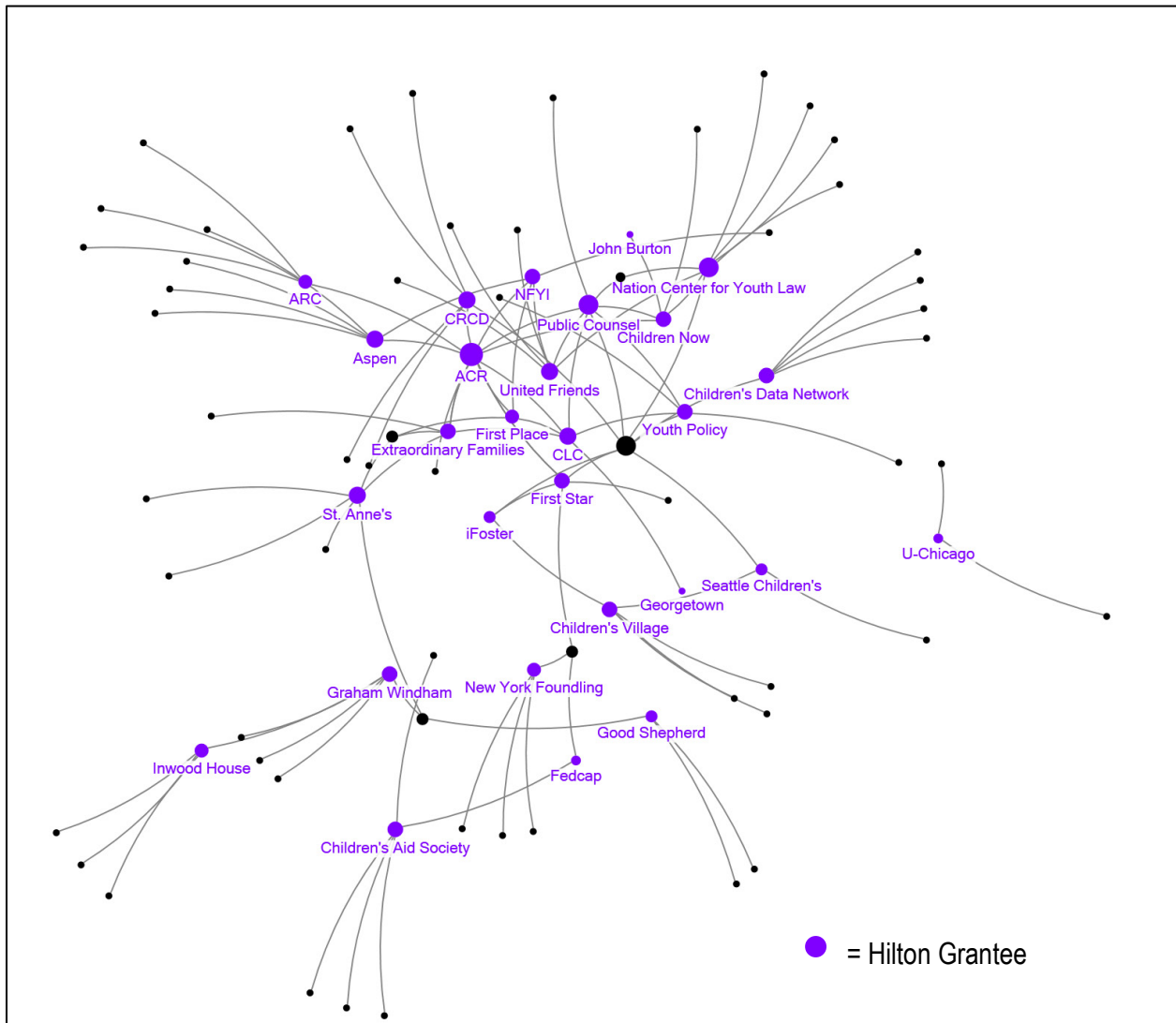
To begin, we refer to Figure 4-1, which displays the FYSI network from SNA I (Time 1). Grantees, which are labeled,² are color-coded aqua, while their partner organizations are black. The size of the circle for each organization in the network is determined by the number of connections associated with that organization. This network has several key features:

- A large amount of collaboration;
- Several “gatekeeper”³ organizations connect parts of the network that would otherwise be separated;
- A large, central core to the network in which many of the grantees are situated; and
- The network is not completely connected – there are portions of the network that are separated from the larger network of connections.

² Non-grantee organizations are not labeled in order to facilitate the readability of each graph. In addition, because this data collection was completed with grantees, non-grantee agencies were not given the opportunity to agree (or not) to being identified. For these reasons, they are not identified.

³ Gatekeepers are those organizations that branch out from the “core” and link the other parts of the network to the larger network. In SNA, gatekeepers serve as **intermediaries or bridges** between portions of the network and play an important role in maintaining the network structure; without them, the network falls apart.

Figure 4-1. FYSI network, Time 1



Figures 4-2 and 4-3, show the current FYSI network (Time 2). Figure 4-2 shows the overall network, while Figure 4-3 shows the same network as displayed in Figure 4-2, but with **new** network connections in red. Looking at these figures and comparing them to Figure 4-1 reveals several interesting changes to the network:

- The **overall number of connections** in the network **has increased**, as has the overall number of organizations in the network.
- **Many of the circles representing each network have increased in size**, indicating an increase in connections within the network. The differences in the sizes of the circles for Good Shepherd, St. Anne’s, and John Burton from Time 1 to Time 2 are good examples of this increase in connections.

- SNA I showed several organizations that were separated from the larger network. Now, **virtually all organizations are connected to the larger network.** This development is likely due to an increasing number of “gatekeeper” organizations and an increase in the connections of existing “gatekeepers.”
- There is clearly **increased collaborative activity** occurring outside the original core portion of the network, which functions to expand the network in size and tie existing network members closer together.

Figure 4-2. Current FYSI network, Time 2

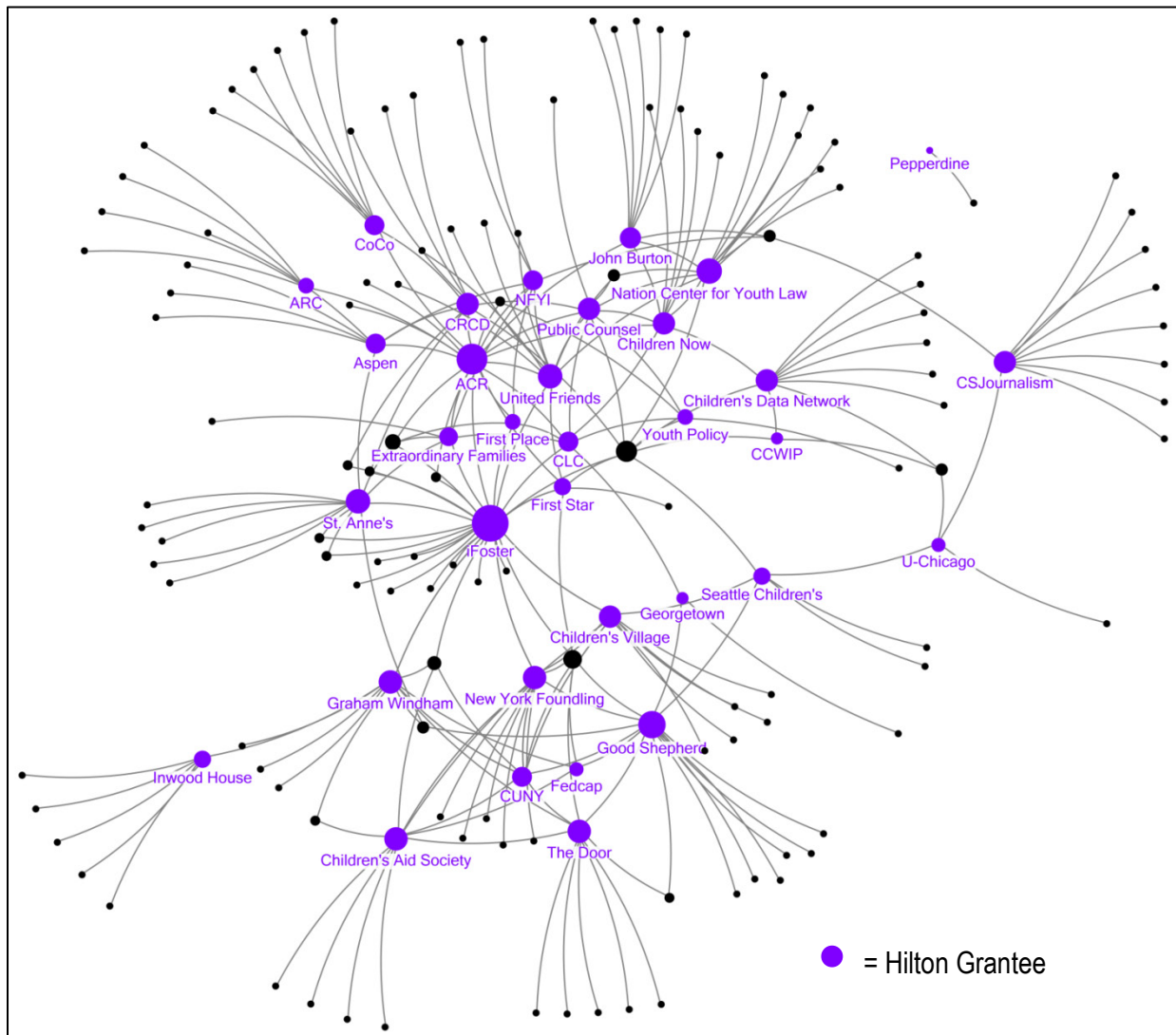
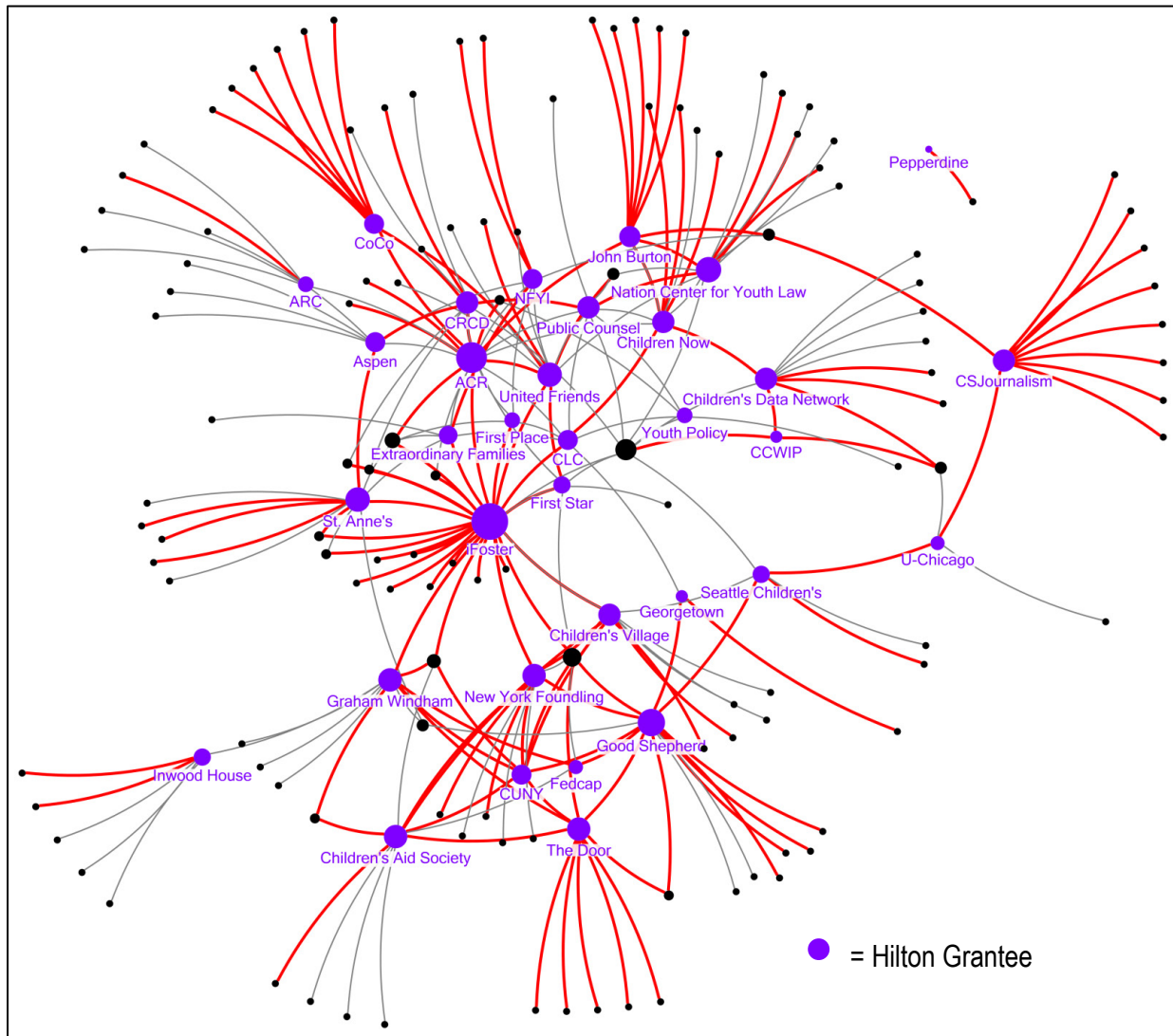


Figure 4-3. Current FYSI network, Time 2 (new connections in red)



4.2 Network Metrics

Beyond simply observing network connections, SNA also allows for the quantitative assessment of networks. Table 4-2 presents summary statistics for the FYSI network at Time 1 and Time 2, as well as the percent change in those statistics over time.⁴

⁴ We do not conduct tests of statistical significance due to the inherent interdependent nature of social network data, which violate the assumptions of independent observations for such tests.

Table 4-2. FYSI network metrics, Time 1 versus Time 2

	Time 1	Time 2	% Change
Number of organizations	87	161	+85
Number of connections	101	224	+122
Density	.027	.018	-33
Centralization	.10	.15	+50
Clustering coefficient	.03	.07	+133
Average degree centrality	2.37	2.92	+23
Average betweenness centrality	156.17	230.58	+48

The results show several interesting changes, including:

- There are substantial increases in the number of organizations in the FYSI network and in the number of connections among those organizations. **These results are clear evidence of network growth.** Some grantees suggest that this growth is being fueled by youth successes that are the result of FYSI. When network partners experience a success, it creates excitement for more networking. The more networking grantees do, the more connections they produce.
- **Network density**, which examines the overall amount of connectivity in the network, **declined**; however, this decline is not unexpected. Density is determined by comparing the number of network connections to the maximum possible number of connections for a network. Because the increase in the number of organizations coming into the network outpaced the number of connections made (organizations need time to make connections to other organizations), the maximum possible connections increased over and above the number of connections made. This is yet another example of network growth.
- **Network centralization**, which examines the extent to which connections are centered around a few, select organizations, **increased over time.** The increase in centralization tells us that some organizations in the FYSI network have had a significant increase in the number of connections over time. However, network centralization was low at Time 1 and remains low at Time 2. This means that while there are a few select organizations that are important to the network, the overall network is mostly evenly dispersed across grantees.
- The **clustering coefficient**, which assesses the extent to which organizations are connecting with others in clusters (or small groups), **increased and is larger than the overall density of the network**; at Time 1, the clustering coefficient and density were almost identical. This development suggests organizations in the FYSI network increasingly connected with others in clusters.
- The **average degree centrality** and **betweenness centrality both increased in the network over time.** These results indicate that each organization increased the number of connections it was associated with, and those connections increasingly place organizations between other organizations. This means that network gaps can be more

easily bridged. For example, if you look at Figure 4-2, you can see that CUNY and Fedcap exist *between* Good Shepherd and Children’s Aid Society. If Good Shepherd wanted to establish a relationship with Children’s Aid Society, it could do that by leveraging its partnership with either CUNY or Fedcap. In this way, CUNY and Fedcap *bridge the gap* between Good Shepherd and Children’s Aid Society.

4.3 Comparisons Before and During FYSI

To establish change over time, we examined the FYSI network prior to the initiative. Specifically, one survey question asked respondents to indicate if their organization had worked with their partner organizations before FYSI began. Figures 4-4 and 4-2 show the network before FYSI (Figure 4-4) and at Time 2 (Figure 4-2). As shown, the changes in the network are quite pronounced, and while the changes are similar to those found from Time 1 to Time 2, the increase from before FYSI to Time 2 is even more substantial. In addition, the networks are mostly separated by geography, with NYC represented in the upper-right corner and LAC in the middle and lower-left side of the figure. Again, this shows that the network has continued to increase over time. Prior to FYSI, the core of the network was less connected and there were multiple subgroups of organizations that were disconnected from the larger group. At Time 2, there are clearly more connections and organizations compared to the network prior to FYSI; this shows a clear increase in collaboration and collaborative partners over time. For example, as shown in Figure 4-4, Inwood House, Aspen, and ARC were completely disconnected from the larger group. By Time 2 (Figure 4-2), however, Inwood House, Aspen, and ARC are fully integrated into the network.⁵ The Time 2 network is not only more robust, but more inclusive of all grantees and partners.

⁵ During data collection for SNA II, Inwood House merged with Children's Village.

Figure 4-4. Network before FYSI implementation

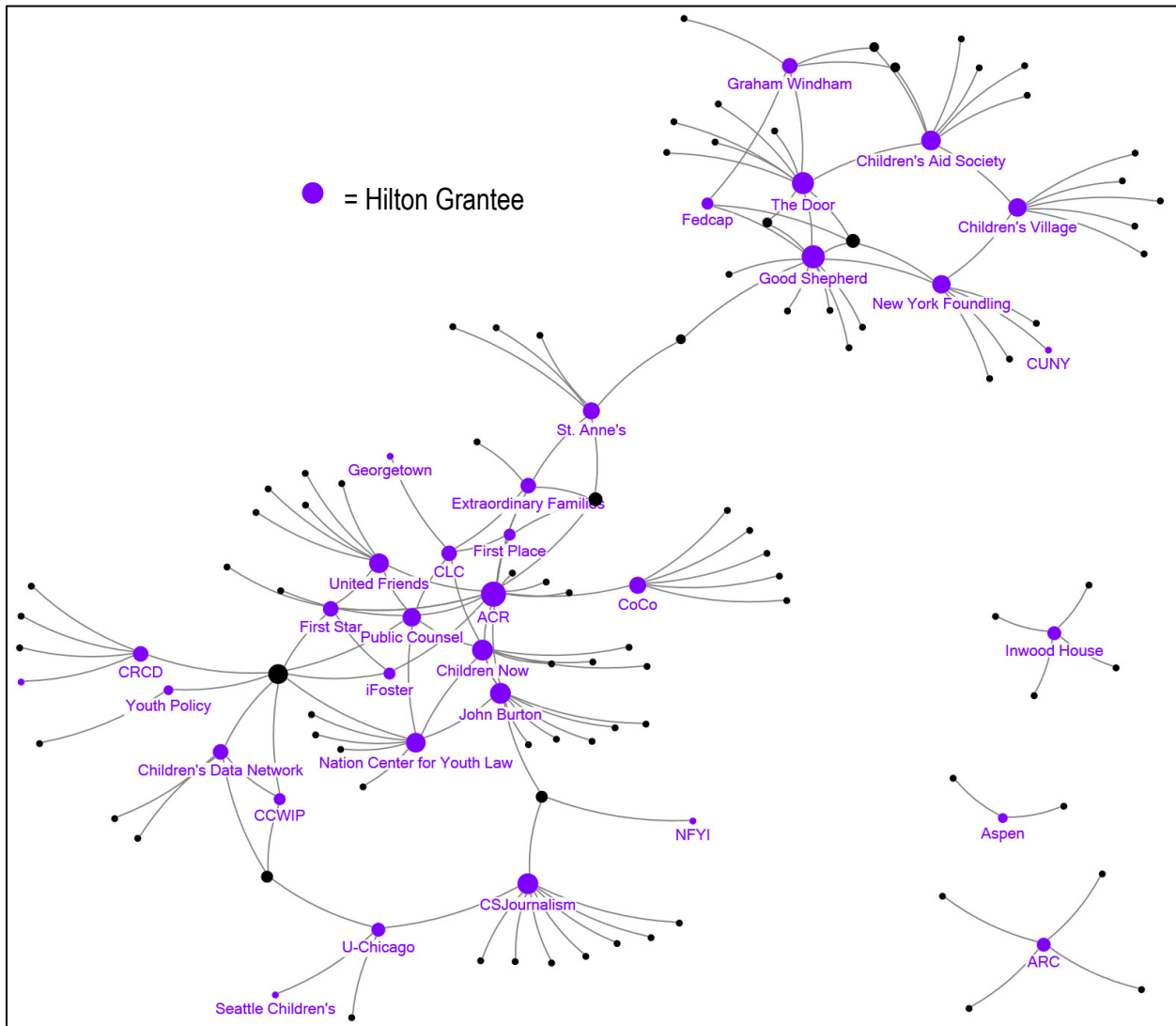


Table 4-3 presents metrics for the network prior to the FYSI and for the FYSI network at Time 2.

Table 4-3. Overall network metrics prior to FYSI implementation and at FYSI Time 2

	Prior to FYSI	Time 2	% Change
Number of organizations	122	161	+32
Number of connections	142	224	+58
Density	.02	.018	-10
Centralization	.09	.15	+67
Clustering coefficient	.05	.07	+40
Average degree centrality	2.38	2.92	+23
Average betweenness centrality	226.08	230.58	+2

Again, there is a pattern of changes similar to those observed when comparing the network at Time 1 and Time 2. Since FYSI began, there have been **increases in the number of organizations and connections in the network, overall centralization, and clustering**. These findings point toward an ever growing network with some organizations developing more connections than others. In addition, increases in clustering and average betweenness indicate that *bridging* connections (those that create bridges from one organization to another) are being made that effectively close previous gaps in the network and further tie existing groups of organizations together. The combined effect of these network characteristics will help insulate the network from possible disruptions to it should organizations leave the network or connections get dropped; this improves the sustainability of the network over time.

4.4 FYSI Network by Region

A key variable in many social networks is geography. Technological advances have increasingly diminished the impact of geography on networks, but it often remains a key factor in some social networks. In the FYSI network, organizations are located in either LAC or NYC, but there are several “dual geography” organizations that are located in both regions. A lack of collaboration among organizations in these different regions is not unexpected given they exist across the country from one another. They do, however, share similar goals in helping to improve services to transition age youth (TAY) and their caregivers, and have reported to the evaluation team, both formally (in the SNA survey) and anecdotally (during informal discussions) that they also share resources. This may help to explain the metrics, presented in Table 4-4, which show the FYSI has softened the impact of the geographical divide between grantees in LAC and NYC; essentially, FYSI has facilitated the building of relationships across regions. In the section that follows, we examine changes within each regional network from Time 1 to Time 2 and describe how region relates to the larger FYSI network.

Table 4-4. Regional network metrics at Times 1 and 2

	Time 1	Time 2	% Change
LAC			
Number of organizations	58	109	+88
Number of connections	71	151	+113
Density	.044	.026	-41
Centralization	.15	.18	+20
Clustering coefficient	.058	.084	+45
Average degree centrality	2.52	2.86	+13
Average betweenness centrality	65.33	133.74	+105
NYC			
Number of organizations	45	68	+51
Number of connections	54	84	+55
Density	.06	.04	-33
Centralization	.22	.19	-14
Clustering coefficient	.086	.05	-42
Average degree centrality	2.62	2.65	+1
Average betweenness centrality	43.82	112.34	+156

Table 4-4 displays network metrics at Times 1 and 2 for each regional network. As shown, several interesting changes occurred, as described here:

There were increases in the numbers of organizations and connections in both regions; but LAC had more sizable increases in the number of organizations and connections than NYC. The changes in LAC largely reflect the changes in the larger FYSI network; that is, the number of connections and organizations have increased, and virtually all organizations are connected to the larger network. While the number of organizations and connections are also increasing in NYC, new organizations appear more isolated, collaborating with one or two other organizations rather than the larger network. These changes seem to reflect to a slower pace of network expansion in NYC than in LAC.

Centralization of connections, clustering of organizations, and average centrality measures all increased among organizations in LAC. In contrast, in NYC, centralization and clustering decreased, while average degree centrality was virtually unchanged. Figures 4-5 and 4-6 display the LAC network at Times 1 and 2, while Figures 4-7 and 4-8 show the NYC network at Times 1 and 2.⁶ The LAC graphs demonstrate the large increase in organizations and connections in the region. These graphs also show how, over time, previously separate network components have evolved into a larger regional network; notice the line in Figure 4-6 connecting

⁶ In each regional graph, black circles indicate LAC organizations; blue circles indicate NYC organizations; and purple circles indicate “dual geography” organizations.

St. Anne's, Aspen, NFYI, CSJournalism, U-Chicago, and CCWIP. Figure 4-6 also shows a tight core of organizations, located at the center of the graph, connected together among multiple, shared collaborators.

Similarly, Figure 4-7 shows several separate NYC network components that are not connected to the larger network. By Time 2 (Figure 4-8), most of those separate networks are connected to the larger network, revealing a more regionally connected network.

Figure 4-5. LAC network, Time 1

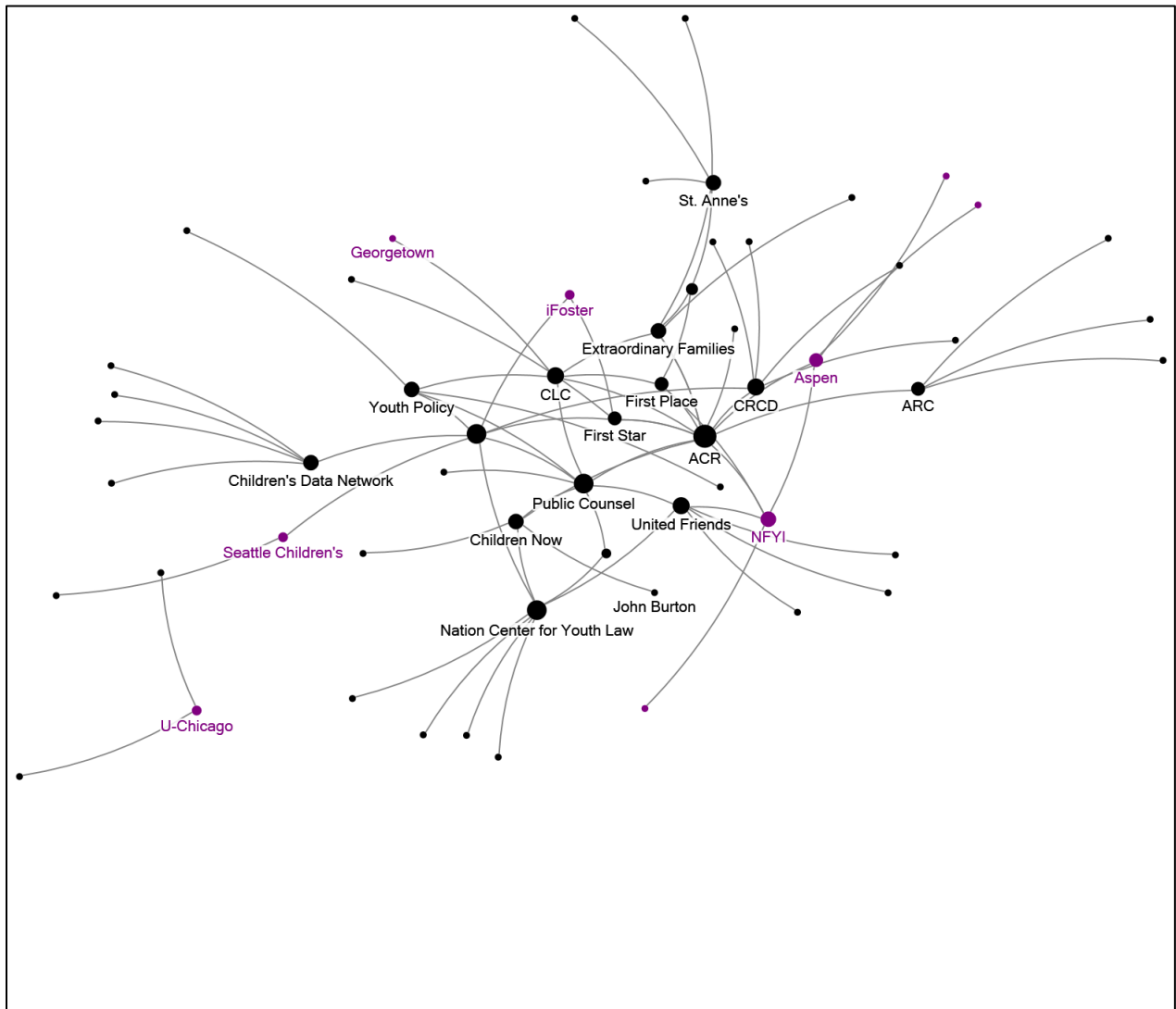


Figure 4-6. LAC network, Time 2

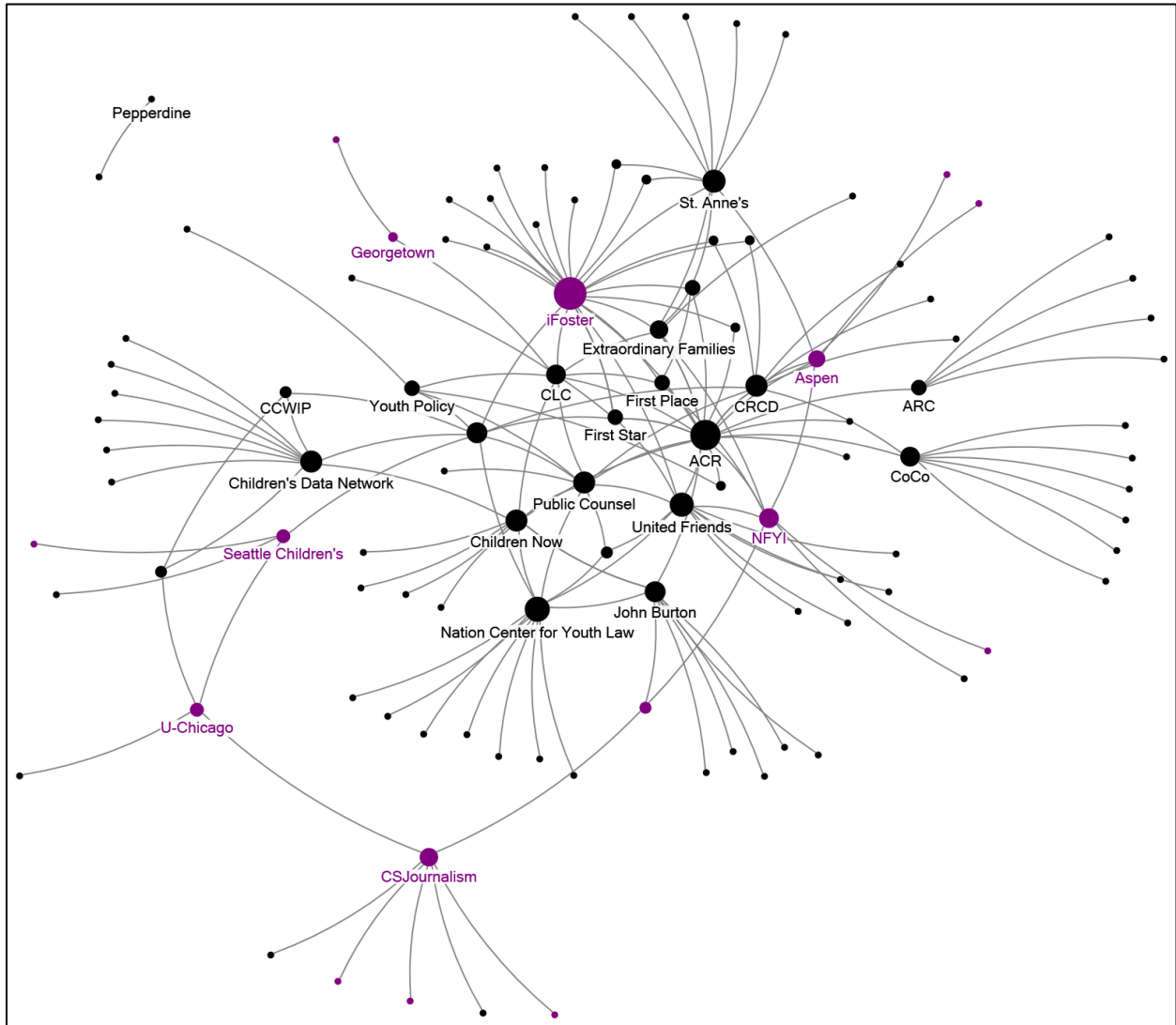


Figure 4-7. NYC network, Time 1

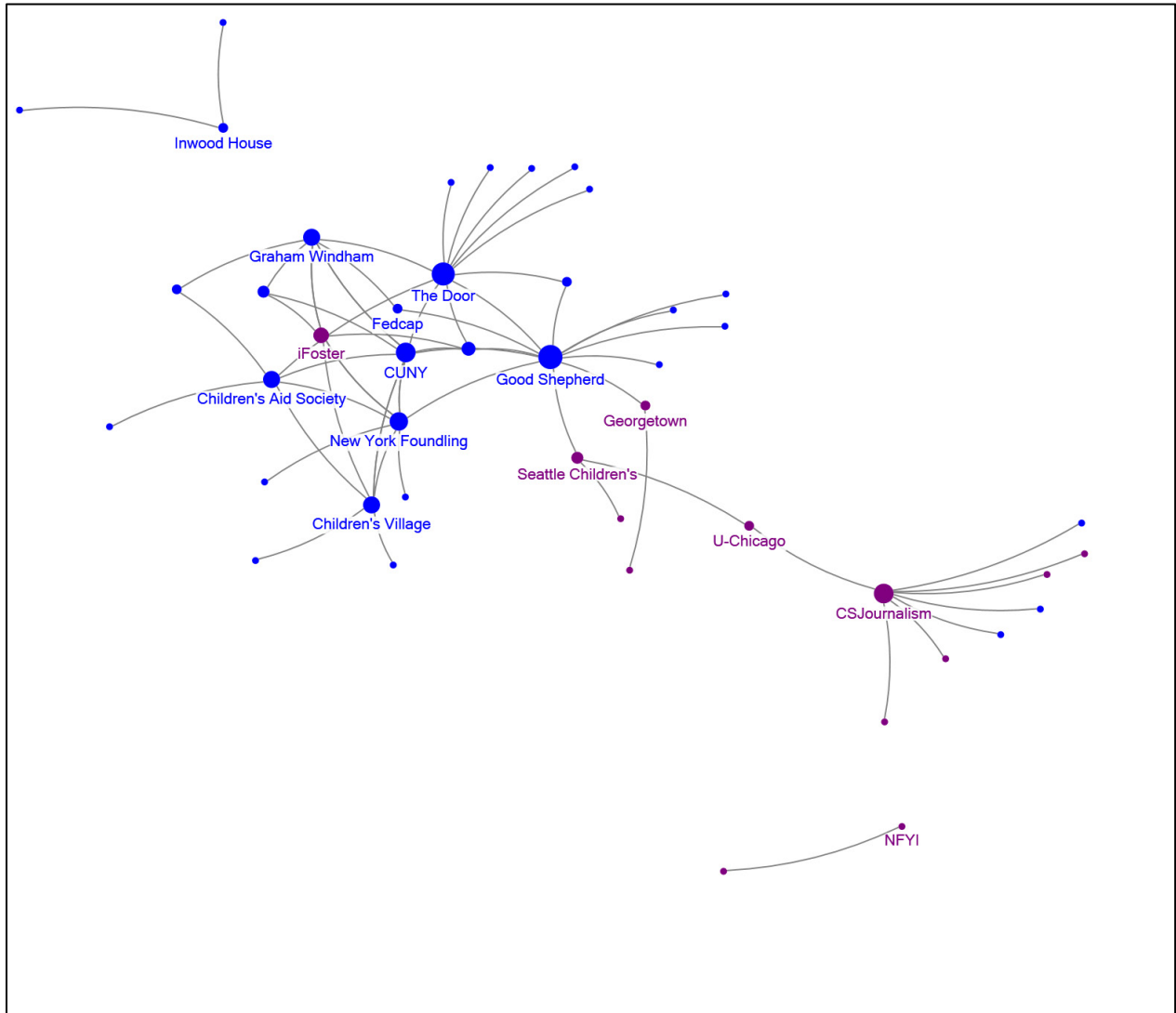
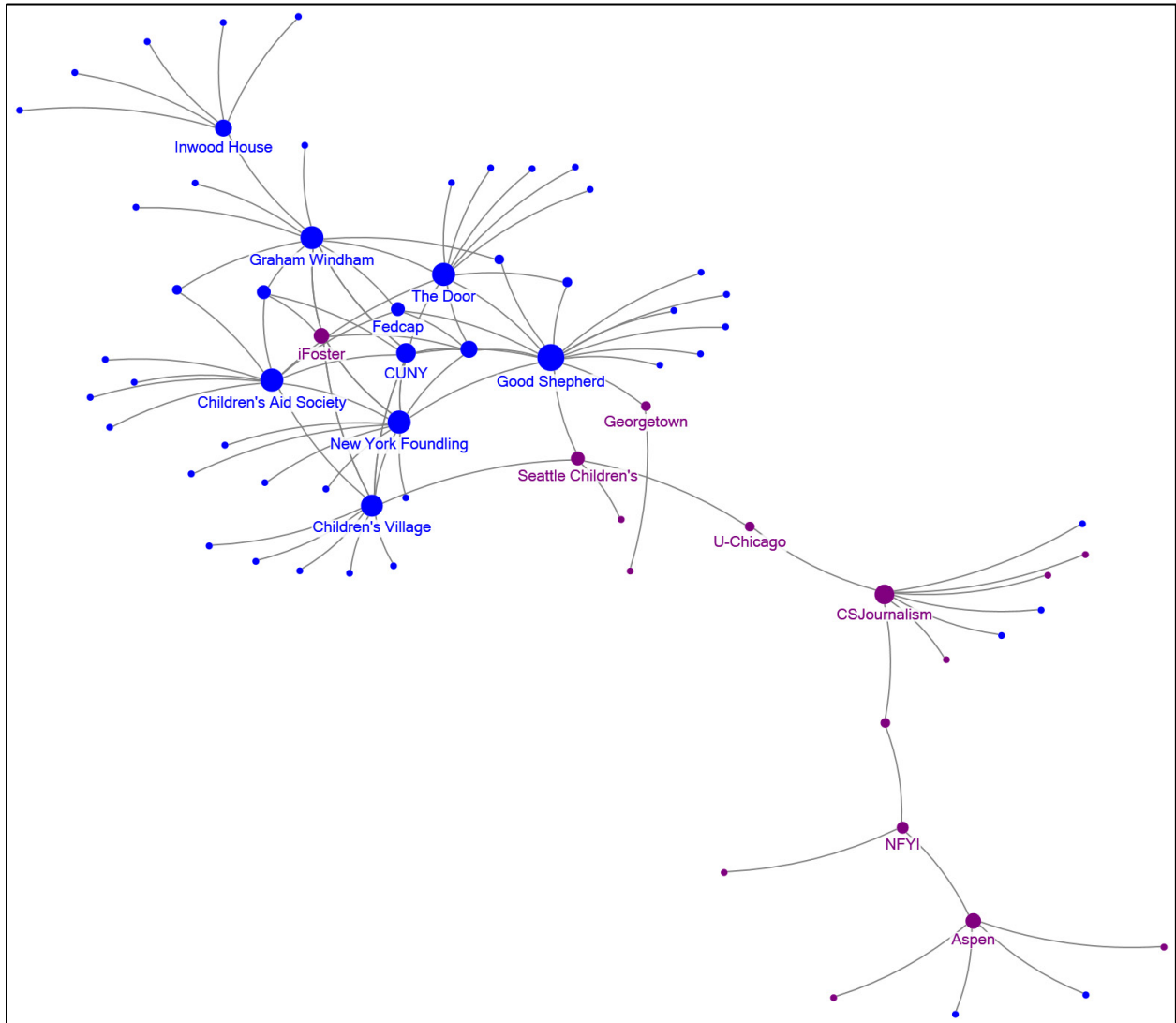


Figure 4-8. NYC network, Time 2



In Figures 4-9 and 4-10, we reconsider the overall FYSI network at Times 1 and 2 in relation to geography, with organizations' geography indicated by circle color. As shown, at Time 1, there are few connections between LAC and NYC organizations, and there are multiple small groups of organizations that are disconnected from the larger network. For example, Inwood House and Good Shepherd are connected, but only tangentially. Figure 4-10 (Time 2) shows the network expansion that has occurred over time, with more connections, overall, and across regions. However, there is still a regional divide. The top two-thirds of the network is dominated by LAC organizations, while the bottom third represents NYC. In both jurisdictions, there are more connections within than across regions. But that is not unexpected. As noted previously, NYC and LAC exist across the country from each other. The fact that connections exist at all between the regions is somewhat remarkable, and is clearly attributable to FYSI. There really is no other explanation for why these organizations would be connected. In addition, all of the disconnected groups of organizations that show up before FYSI and at Time 1 are all connected to the larger network at Time 2.⁷ This is evidence of the strong network connections between FYSI grantees and their partner organizations, many of which did not exist before the FYSI.

⁷ The only organization not part of the larger network is Pepperdine and its partner organization. This may be because at the time of data collection, Pepperdine was the most recently funded grantee and may not yet have had enough time to forge connections with the larger network.

Figure 4-9. FYSI by geography, Time 1

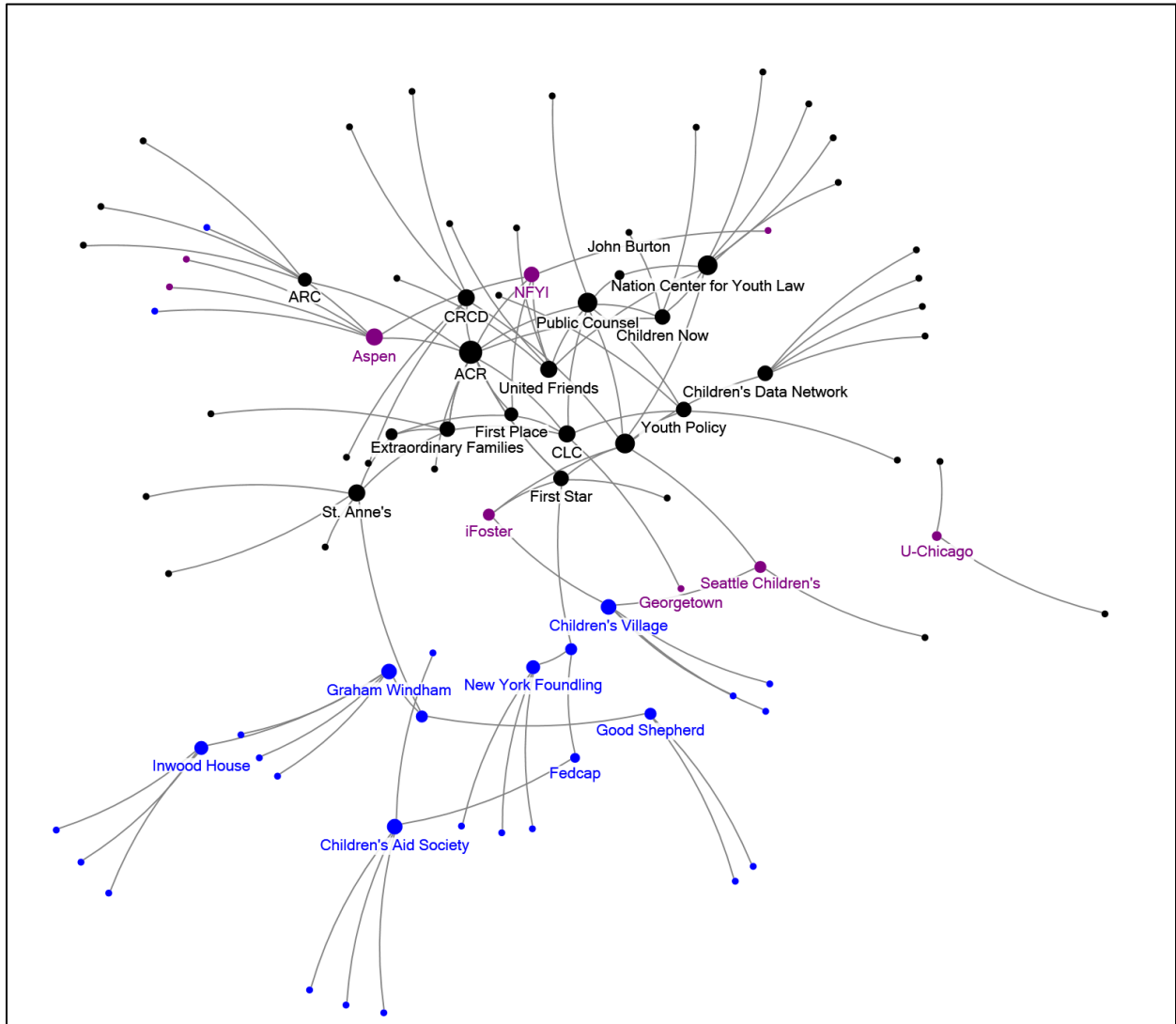
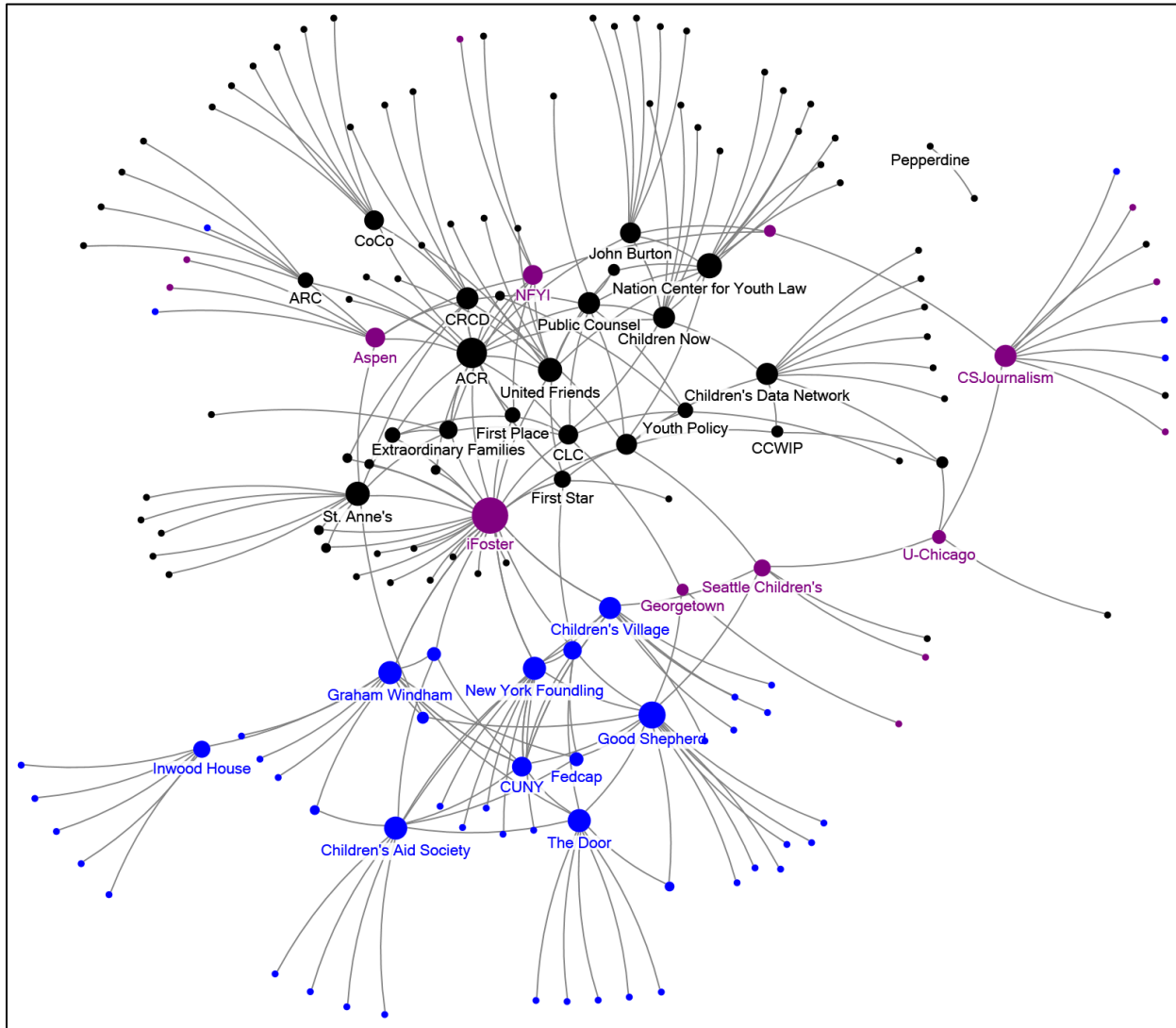


Figure 4-10. FYSI by geography, Time 2



4.5 FYSI Network by Organization Type

To examine the network by organizational type, we disaggregated the overall network by organizational type. Specifically, we examine the network of connections among FYSI grantees, only, and then examine the networks of connections among FYSI grantees and public organizations, and among FYSI grantees and private organizations, respectively.

At the core of the FYSI network are the connections among the grantees. Table 4-5 displays network metrics at Times 1 and 2 for the network of connections among grantees.

Table 4-5. Network metrics for FYSI grantees only at Times 1 and 2

	Time 1	Time 2	% Change
Number of organizations	24	33	+37
Number of connections	28	60	+114
Density	.05	.13	+160
Centralization	.35	.32	-8
Clustering coefficient	.12	.33	+175
Average degree centrality	1.76	4.18	+137
Average betweenness centrality	9.65	28.82	+199

The metrics show a modest increase in grantee organizations from Time 1 to Time 2. Interestingly, the increase in connections from Time 1 and Time 2 is much larger than the proportional increase in organizations. This sharp increase in connections, coupled with the more modest increase in organizations, leads to the substantial increase in network density between Time 1 and 2. In combination, these changes indicate that **FYSI grantees have become more tightly connected among themselves.**

There has also been a slight decline in centralization, which suggests that the importance of any one particular organization has declined among the grantee network. Essentially, the network is mostly evenly dispersed among grantees than previously. In addition, the grantee network experienced sizable increases in clustering and average centrality measures. Taken together, these findings indicate that grantees are expanding their connections to other grantees; that is, new connections are being formed across the network. Lastly, the large increase in the clustering coefficient shows that grantees are generally connected in two large clusters of connections that are mostly geographically determined. Again, while cross-region collaboration is happening, it is happening slowly.

Figures 4-11 and 4-12 display the grantee-only network at Times 1 and 2.⁸ At Time 1, there is one cluster of grantees forming a core of grantee connections (mostly LAC based). There are also several separated pairs of inter-grantee connections and several isolated grantees with no connections to other grantees. At Time 2, almost all grantees have at least one connection to another grantee, and almost all grantees are part of the larger inter-grantee network. The amount of inter-grantee connections has increased among both LAC- and NYC-based organizations, and a handful of “dual geography” grantees have formed connections with organizations in both regions, acting as bridges or “gatekeepers” in the inter-grantee network.

⁸ In each graph, black circles indicate LAC organizations; blue circles indicate NYC organizations; and purple circles indicate “dual geography” organizations.

Figure 4-11. FYSI grantee (only) network, Time 1

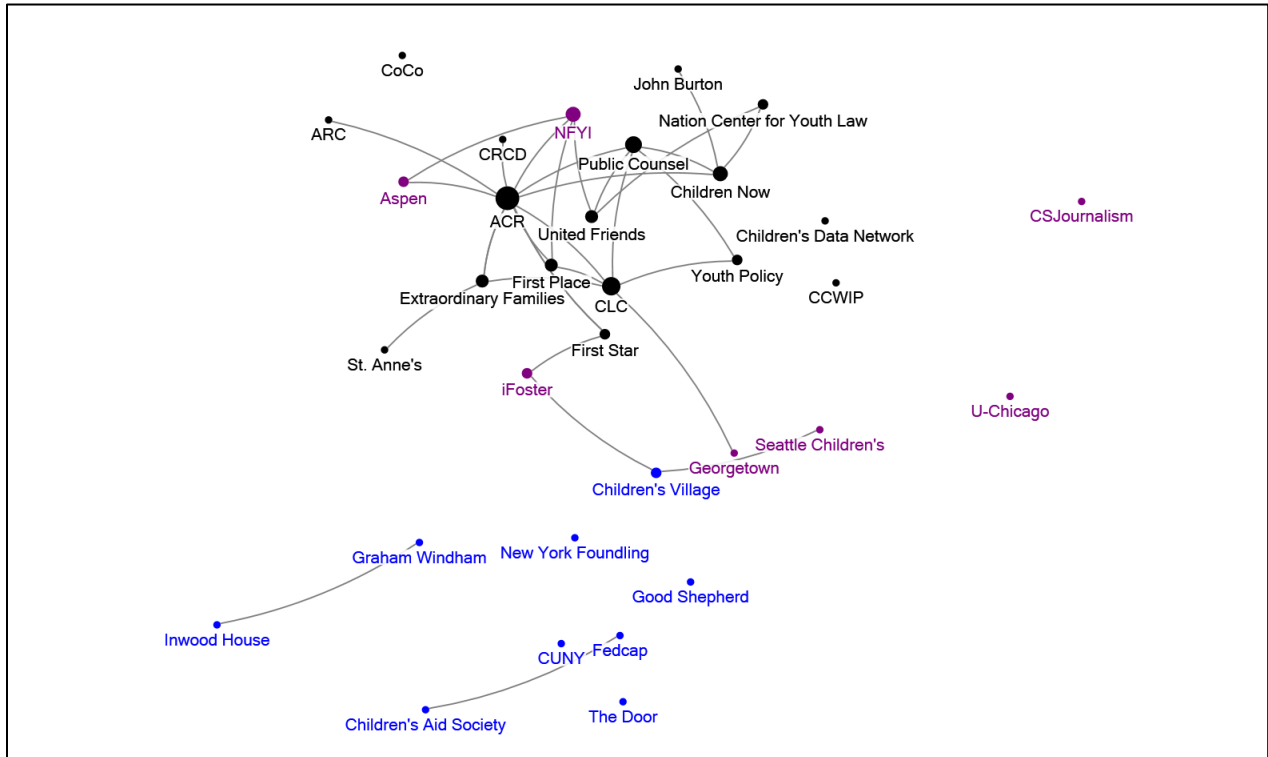
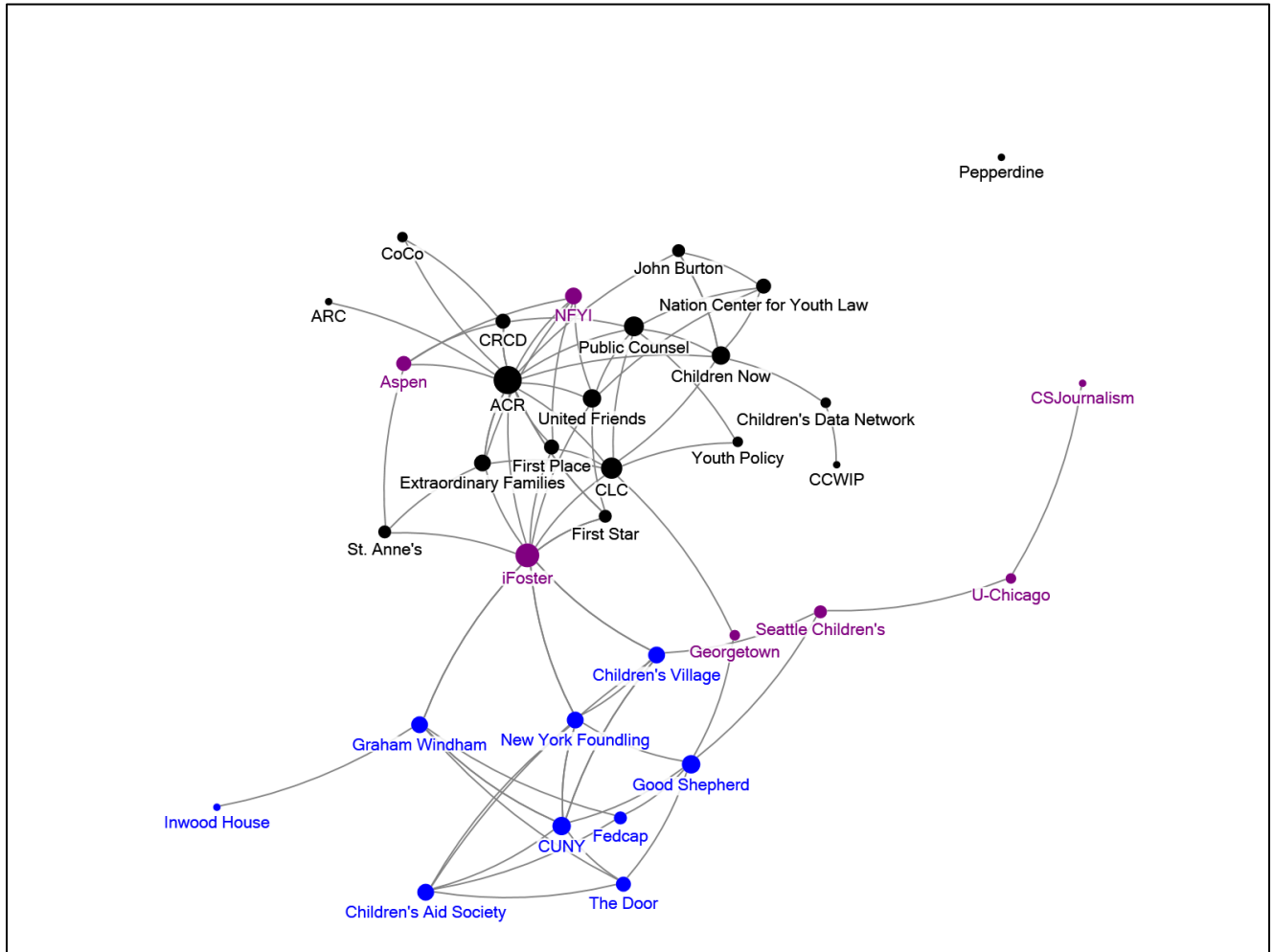


Figure 4-12. FYSI grantee (only) network, Time 2



Finally, we examined the networks of connections among (1) grantees and public agencies, and (2) grantees and private agencies.⁹ Table 4-6 presents the metrics for this analysis, displaying the number of organizations and connections for both networks at Times 1 and 2.

⁹ Public agencies include city and state government organizations, as well as publicly funded charter schools, colleges, and publicly funded educational support organizations. Private agencies include privately funded foundations, advocacy groups, community agencies, education agencies, workforce agencies, research partners, and foster agencies.

Table 4-6. Network metrics at Times 1 and 2 for respective networks of grantees with public and private agencies

	Time 1	Time 2	% Change
Grantees and public agencies			
Number of organizations	48	76	+58
Number of connections	58	120	+107
Grantees and private agencies			
Number of organizations	65	118	+81
Number of connections	71	164	+131

Figures 4-13 and 4-14 show the connections between grantees and public agencies for Times 1 and 2. Figures 4-15 and 4-16 display the connections between grantees and private agencies. In both cases, the increase in organizations and connections demonstrate the overall growth of the FYSI network. As shown, many of the connections between grantees and private agencies are isolated collaborations, separate from other grantees. This may be due to the nature of the relationship grantees have with private agencies. In many cases, grantees work with a select group of service-providing agencies to serve their TAY population. In contrast, there are several public agencies with connections to multiple grantees, most notably ACS and DCFS (labeled in Figures 4-13 and 4-14). They have strong connections to multiple agencies. This is not unexpected. We recognize that most grantees have a direct relationship with the public child welfare agency in their jurisdiction. Considering the findings highlighted here, while there are more connections between grantees and private agencies, grantees' connections to the public agencies may be more important to collaboration within the larger FYSI network. That is, private agencies appear to be important to many individual grantees, but public agencies appear to be important, collectively, to multiple grantees.

Figure 4-13. FYSI network: Grantees and public agencies, Time 1

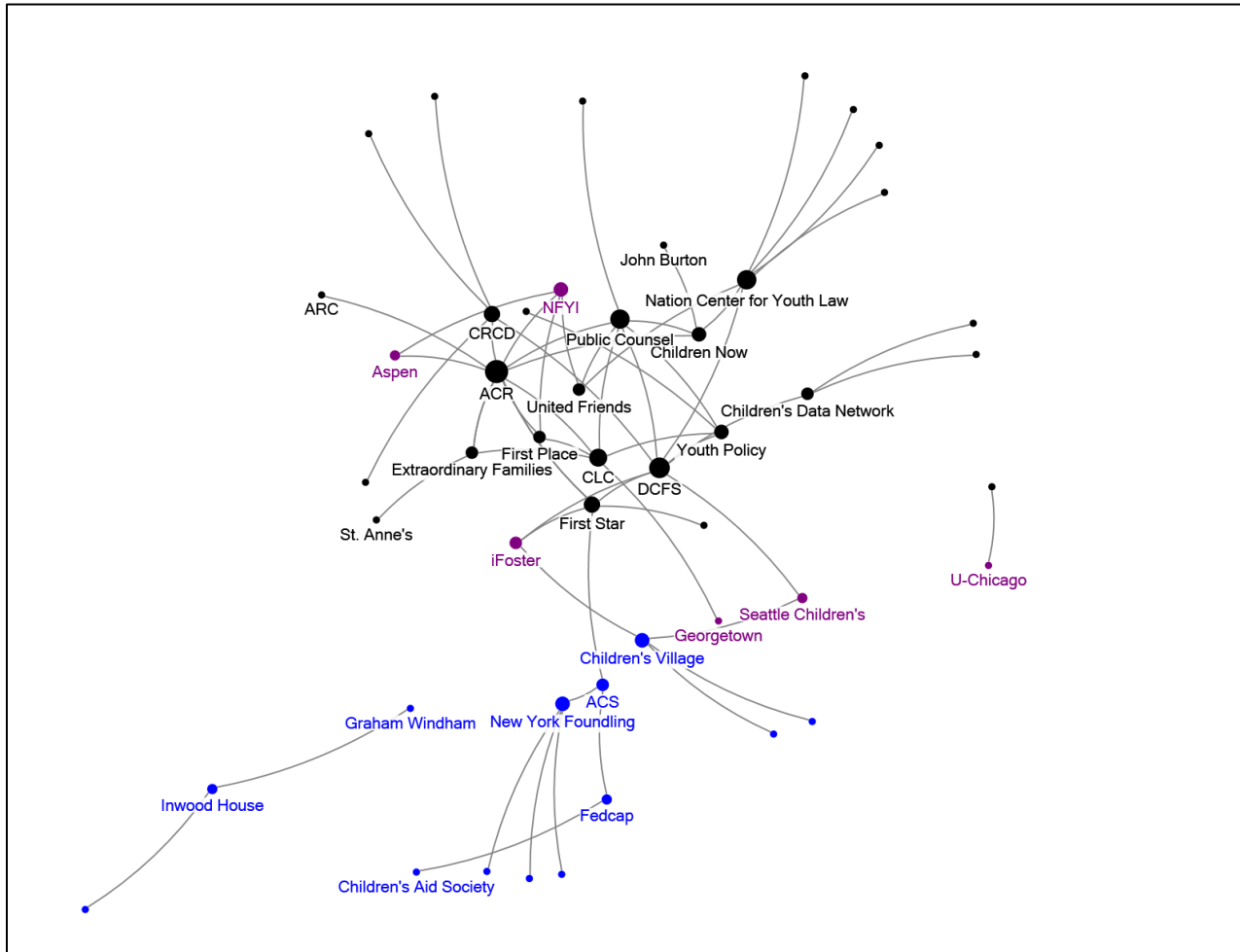


Figure 4-14. FYSI network: Grantees and public agencies, Time 2

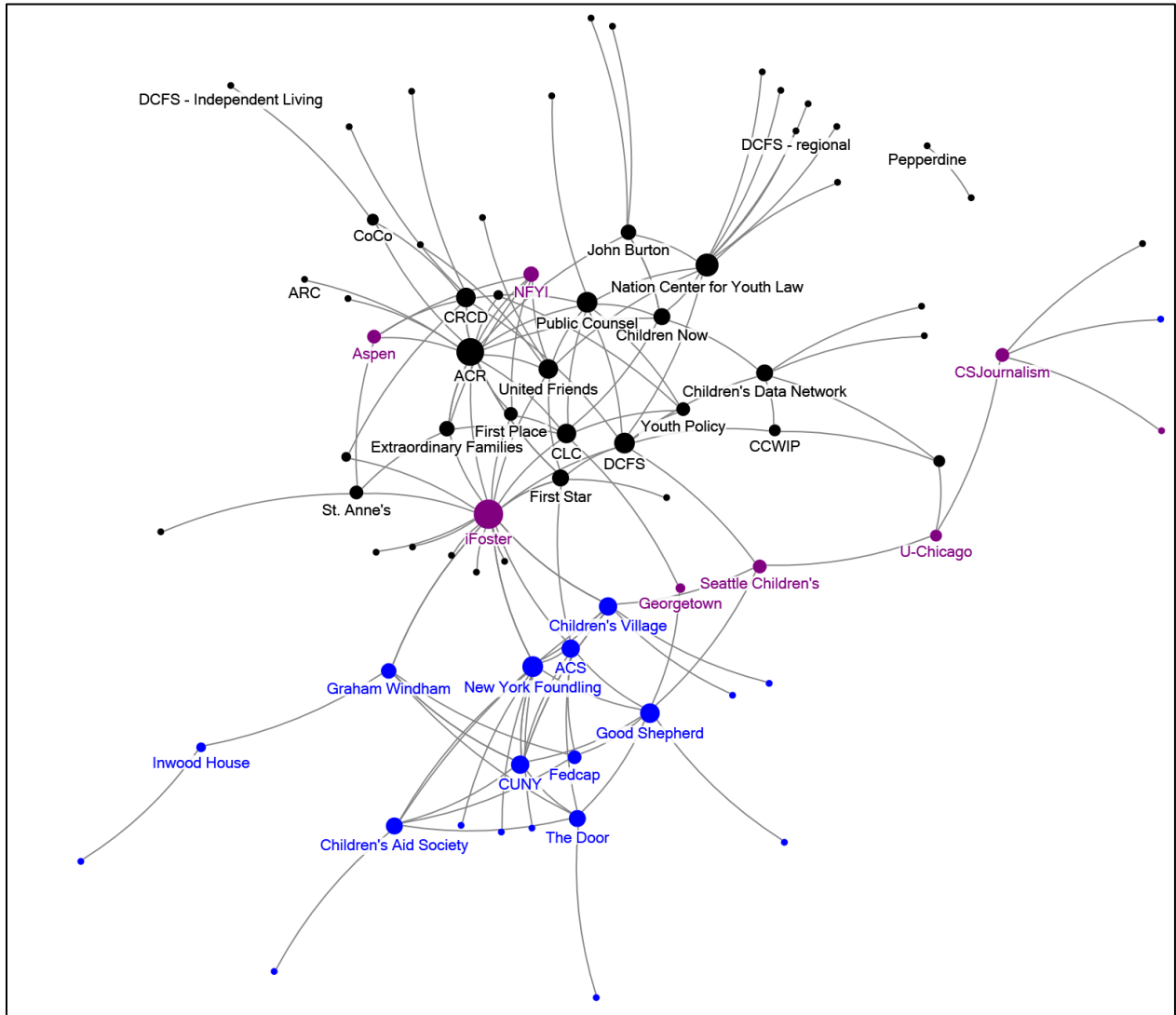


Figure 4-15. FYSI network: Grantees and private agencies, Time 1

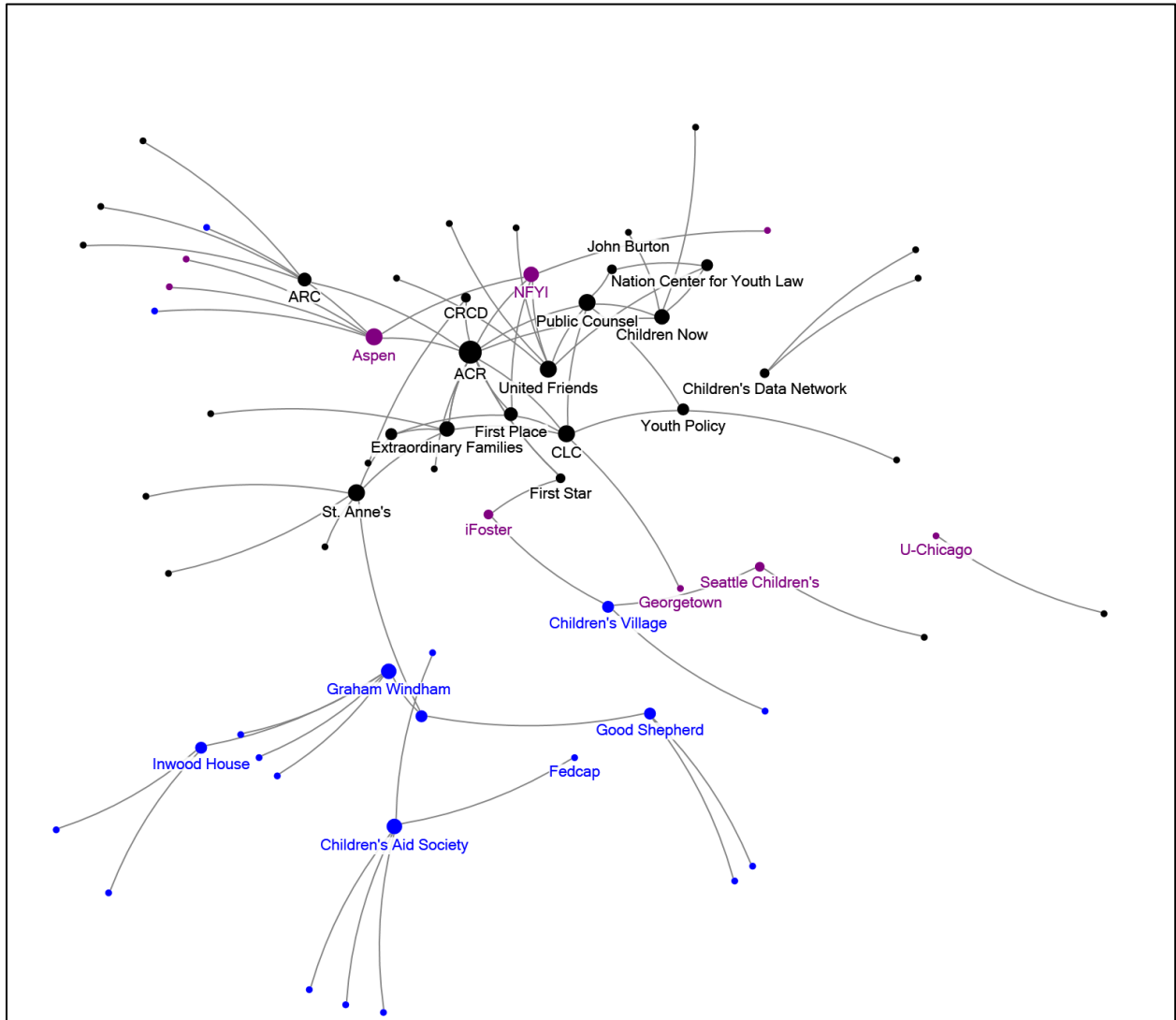
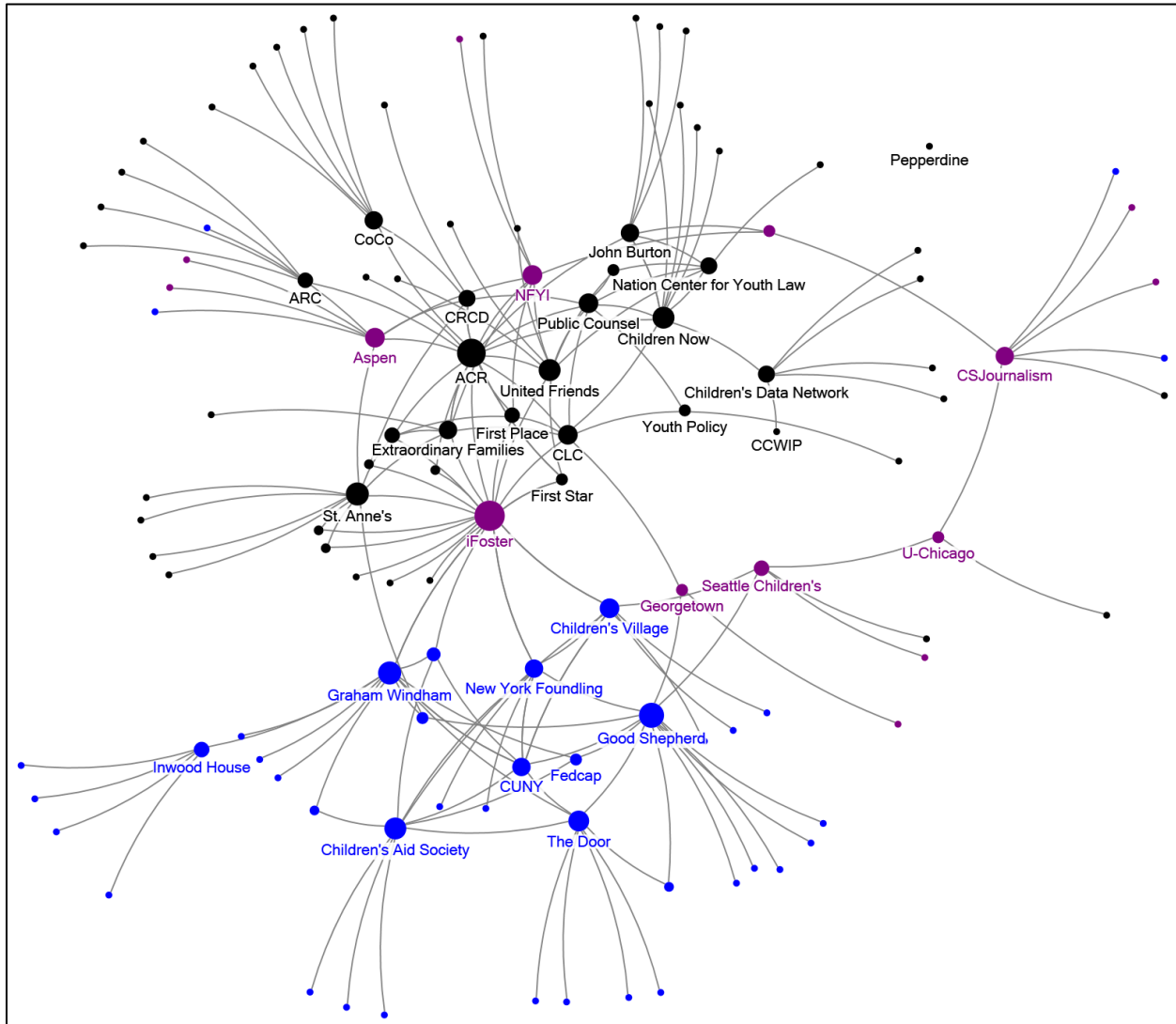


Figure 4-16. FYSI network: Grantees and private agencies, Time 2



4.6 Summary of Findings

Taken together, the social network analysis findings demonstrate substantial growth in connectivity and collaboration in the FYSI network over time. Collaborations appear to occur, increasingly, in small groups of organizations with “gatekeeper” organizations bridging the connections among those groups. Quantitative metrics indicate clustering and bridging of those clusters, indicating a network structure that could effectively facilitate FYSI functions and expansion. Specifically, organizational clusters might serve to facilitate the needs and activities of organizations at the local level, while gatekeepers, in bridging the connections to other clusters of organizations, promote

opportunities for network expansion (i.e., collaboration) and resource sharing across jurisdictions. There also appears to be an ongoing geographical influence on overall network structure; that is, while cross-regional ties have increased substantially, geography still poses a slight barrier to collaboration. The grantees themselves are increasingly connecting and collaborating with each other and have effectively established a “core” structure of collaborations. Finally, connections to private agencies have effectively expanded the overall network, while connections to public agencies serve to tie grantees together.

As evidenced by the findings presented here, FYSI is meeting the goal of strengthening and increasing cross-sector collaboration among grantees and partner organizations in LAC and NYC. Since SNA I, grantees have developed new connections and bridged gaps in the network, making it stronger. In addition, the combined effect of current network characteristics (increases in number of organizations and connections, overall centralization, and clustering) improves the sustainability of the network over time. This means the FYSI network can be sustained over time, even if certain members drop away. This is an important detail; essentially, it means that FYSI has strengthened the infrastructure by which child welfare serving agencies and organizations in LAC and NYC collaborate around shared interests, which can lead to actions, investments, and program and policy initiatives that are better aligned and informed by these shared interests.

In addition, the kind of collaboration documented here also serves to eliminate “silos.” Silos occur when separate systems (e.g., child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health) serving youth and families with cross-system needs do not talk to each other and compete for funding and other resources instead of figuring out how to integrate and leverage resources for a more comprehensive response to youth and families. Several grantees have discussed the importance of addressing TAY and other child welfare challenges via an interdisciplinary approach that eliminates silos. By encouraging—and successfully initiating and sustaining—collaboration among its grantees and their partner agencies, including the public child welfare agencies in NYC and LAC, FYSI is facilitating the development of a coordinated network that can better meet the multiple and changing needs of child welfare involved children and their families, including TAY. This achievement circles directly back to one of the key goals of FYSI: to create and strengthen cross-sector coordinated efforts among grantees in LAC and NYC. The findings presented here provide clear evidence of the success of FYSI in achieving this goal.