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"We Do More Than Discuss Good Ideas": A Close Look at the Development of Professional Capital in an Elementary Education Liaison Group

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"We Do More Than Discuss Good Ideas":
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By Jennifer L. Snow, Susan D. Martin, & Sherry Dismuke

In an era when many news media, policy makers, and professionals in the field may consider teacher education "under attack," teacher education programs are being held accountable for increased rigor (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012). Teacher educators are in a unique position to examine more closely specific practices and teacher education as a profession to enhance program quality and candidate outcomes. Toward that end, we focused on work within a *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998) for this inquiry. Faculty who work in elementary school settings at least one day per week, serving as liaisons to partner schools and supervising teacher candidates, made up this community.

Faculty at this institution worked collaboratively to share leadership and go against the grain of institutional hierarchical structures (Martin, Snow, Osguthorpe, Coll, & Boothe, 2012). They embraced clinical practice as the heart of the teacher education program (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010). Within this context, they created a space for clinical supervisors to share publicly their work with each other and enact change, as they engaged in profes-

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sional development through the Elementary Education Liaison Group (EELG). This community had evolved from a committee structure into a working community of inquiry over the course of 4 years and involved participants from different positions and perspectives (i.e., tenure-track faculty, administrators, part-time supervisors, and full-time clinical faculty and lecturers in the university). After reviewing the history of the EELG and anecdotal evidence of changes wrought by the EELG, we decided to investigate our practices further, asking what additional professional development and program changes we needed to make. Therefore we designed a systematic investigation of EELG practice and its internal and external influence. Our research questions included the following: (a) How do participants experience the EELG context and its influence on how they learn and develop? (b) How does the elementary education community of practice influence individual and programmatic change?

Throughout this article, we describe our theoretical framework for professional development as well as the resulting emphasis on professional capital of a particular group of educators (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). We outline the research design before describing three key themes connected to teacher educator professional development and its influential outcomes. We end with a focus on professional capital and the power of collective activity to transform teacher educator development and teacher education contexts for program transformation.

Theoretical Perspectives

As Levine (2011) noted, "we have few models to suggest how programs might promote supervisors' professional growth" (p. 930). Along those lines, Goodwin and Kosnick (2013) highlighted the need for considering what knowledge base effective teacher educators should have. Therefore we undertook this systematic investigation of a collective case centered on the EELG community of practice and its influences on clinical supervisor practice and professional development. In this study, we investigated liaison perspectives on interactions in this community of practice (Wenger, 1998; see also Lave & Wenger, 1991) as well as its influence on developing their practice as teacher educators and effecting program change. Because structures in higher education institutions are often hierarchical, this community was unique in its efforts and power to effect change on individual and institutional levels.

Theoretical perspectives that provide the foundation of our inquiry are rooted in social network theory, professional development in community, and learning through inquiry to frame professional development and teacher educator capacity. Reviewing collaborative structures in education communities, we used social network theory as a foundation to frame our community–network connections and potential associations with outcomes (Moolenaar, Sleegers, & Daly, 2012).

Social Network Theory

Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, and Burke (2010) examined teachers' social networks and their resulting influence on education reform through social network theory. Connecting social network theory to social capital, Daly et al. described the density of networks and resulting potential for change. According to Daly and colleagues, "social capital is concerned with the resources that exist in social relationships (sometimes referred to as 'ties') between individuals as opposed to the resources of a specific individual" (p. 364). Considering the collective impact of EELG activity, we used social network theory to examine social capital and "the content that flows through relationships" to consider educator development and outcomes of such development through community.

Although much research using social network theory or relationships as a focus concentrates on schools and district-level educational reform (Daly et al., 2012; Elmore & Burney, 1997; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Moolenaar et al., 2012), we expanded it for this collective case study focused on a site of higher education and teacher educator professional development. Considering change as "the interaction of participants" (Mohrman, Tenkasi, & Mohrman, 2003, p. 321), we used a focus on a community of inquiry geared toward professional development provided for individual participant perspectives and interactions to highlight a view of social capital.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) identified human, social, and decisional capital as *professional capital*. Our theoretical perspectives included that "making decisions in complex situations is what professionalism is all about" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012, p. 5). Goodwin and Kosnick (2013) described how teacher educators should be able to

> transcend the practicalities (and limitations) of discrete teaching skills and tools gained from previous teaching experience; and develop ways of thinking about and approaching teaching and learning that promote the application of a professional repertoire to a vast array of dilemmas, most of which cannot possibly be anticipated beforehand. (p. 337)

This work is complex and informed by personal, contextual, pedagogical, sociological, and social knowledge (Goodwin & Kosnick, 2013). Social network theory allows for the professional capital involved in making complex decisions in community.

Likewise, building on the social capital from social network theory and integrating it with human and decisional capital, we note the potential for capacity building and enactment of professional capital. Of primary importance is the idea that professional capital occurs in the complex negotiations of practice, humans, decisions, and social contexts, particularly when naysayers are included to better inform all of the decisions made and enacted. With an investment in "capability and commitment" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), education communities may collaborate on decisions and practices while at the same time emphasizing the intellectual work and public aspect of a field like teacher education.

Connecting teacher educator professional development to social network theory involves human capital in the sense of who participates. Human capital is about knowledge of a certain discipline, knowledge of students (teacher candidates in this case), knowledge of context, and the ability "to sift and sort the science of successful and innovative practice" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 89). It also involves "passion and moral commitment" (p. 89). However, this human capital need not be developed in isolation. Therefore the interactions and relationships as emphasized in social network theory are key to the integration of professional, human, social, and decisional capital. Hargreaves and Fullan acknowledge that "the essence of professionalism is the ability to make discretionary judgments" (p. 93). Our theoretical framework adds the complexity of decision making in community.

Professional Development in Community

Related to teacher educator professional development and "collegial collaboration" (Lieberman & Miller, 2008), the EELG emphasized the collaboration of clinical teacher educators in a supportive community. This particular context of professional development was largely informed by the foundational basis of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and cultures of inquiry (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Boston College Evidence Team, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Snow-Gerono, 2005) as a means to develop capacity for agency as teacher educators. A large part of this EELG community was based in "honest talk" that "invites the disclosure of and reflection on the problems of practice" (Little & Horn, 2007, p. 50). Within this space, teacher educators worked toward collegial rather than congenial collaboration (Lieberman & Miller, 2008) and were willing to engage multiple perspectives and differences in practice.

As teacher educators working to improve professional practice and learning outcomes for teacher candidates (and their P-12 students), we recognized the importance of "centering teacher education in practice" (Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 498). As collaborators at the university level, liaisons recognized the need to "build relationships in two directions" (Null, 2009, p. 446). Null recommended building relationships not only with P-12 schools but also "inward toward our faculty colleagues and university administrators" (p. 446). In this sense, teacher educators may "establish ourselves as faculty leaders who integrate what to teach and how to teach while at the same time focusing on the moral, civic, and spiritual ends of the teaching profession" (p. 446). This EELG community of practice was focused on work outside the university context while at the same time targeting development together. We emphasized the complicated interaction of relationships and social capital in the work of clinical teacher educators.

There is a "moral imperative" in teacher education (Fullan, 2011) in that this work emphasizes the integration of knowledge, skills, and dispositions in teacher educators and practice. Communities of practice may employ "moral imperative as a strategy" in connection to the following framework (Fullan, 2011):

1. make a personal commitment
2. build relationships
3. focus on implementation
4. develop the collaborative
5. connect to the outside
6. be relentless (and divert distracters) (p. 3)

Carefully considering negotiations of practice and larger purposes of teacher educator work, we highlight the professional development in social communities of practice.

Learning Through Inquiry

Communities of practice also emphasize inquiry into practice to develop stronger frameworks and public intellectualism (Cochran-Smith, 2006). Creating professional development for teacher educators to gain a sense of public intellectualism means helping them find their voice in program and systemic change, where they can consider rational thought and the complexities of teaching within political contexts. These acts integrate social and decisional capital in a practical manner. Likewise, teacher educators may often be positioned below other intellectuals in university systems (Labaree, 2004). Such a perspective complicates and informs teacher educators as they work to follow hierarchical demands while at the same time employing promising pedagogies in the field. With a network of relationships and interactions at the heart of communities of practice, teacher educators negotiate an institutional structure focused more on hierarchical communication to pursue opportunities for public discourse on teacher educator practice.

We held learning in community and through inquiry at the forefront of perspectives on professional development for this study. Working to model teacher educator practice as authentic toward what is hoped that teacher candidates will embrace in their own professional contexts, EELG participant focus was centered on emulating an inquiry stance toward teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). The EELG endeavored to understand the work of teacher education in terms of the generation of knowledge-in-practice, knowledge-for-practice, and eventually knowledge-of-practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). This knowledge-*of*-practice consists of investigating the knowledge constructed through a person's own practice and the knowledge generated *for* best practice in teacher education so that teacher educators may promote an integrated and co-constructed knowledge for teacher education application across the professional life-span. The EELG inquiry community embraced the concepts of sharing and constructing knowledge together while at the same time honoring knowledge generated by those outside this community's practice. An example would be an invitation toward experts in the disciplinary fields or in learning-centered supervision (Danielson, 2013) who inform work as a community of practice. Our positioning toward knowledge was also something emphasized in the program so that novice educators could embrace

inquiry and the co-construction of knowledge as important professional educator characteristics.

Methods for Inquiry

For this inquiry into the nature, practices, and affordances of a complex collective, we utilized qualitative case study methods (Stake, 2000; Yin, 1984). Case study allowed us to account for the disparate nature of the EELG members, complex interactions within the group, and both group and individual development over time as it related to issues of effective teacher education practices and policies.

EELG Practice and Participants

The EELG members worked within a college of education (COE) in a state university in the northwestern United States. Teacher candidates in the undergraduate elementary education programs spend a professional year in partner schools: 3 days per week in the first semester internship and then full-time student teaching for another semester. Liaisons, depending on workload allocations, were expected to be out in partner schools 1-2 days per week, supervising 6-12 teacher candidates. They observed and provided feedback to candidates, while also holding weekly seminars with cohort groups, monthly meetings with mentor teachers, and informal meetings with principals. The nature of this work was complex and demanding (Martin, Snow, & Torrez, 2011).

At the time of this study, a culture of shared leadership for teacher education had taken root and grown within the COE during the prior 4 academic years. Members of the Teacher Education Leadership Team, the associate dean for teacher education, and three tenure-track faculty members worked together to share and distribute leadership. Two of the tenure-track faculty members, who were also engaged in liaison work with partner elementary schools, took charge of the elementary supervisors' group, which had historically met monthly simply to discuss procedural issues. They began to re-form and repurpose this group with a clear focus on effective support of teacher candidates in their field experiences.

Re-formation of the group included an examination and minimization of adjunct faculty who had track records of limited observation schedules or ineffectual supervision. Interested and experienced graduate students were recruited into supervision work, and two clinical faculty lines were added. Tenure-track faculty who were not interested in liaison work were no longer required to engage in it; they were encouraged to pursue other scholarly areas of expertise and teaching.

During these 4 years, meetings focused on sharing and deconstructing practices to co-construct knowledge and skills toward effective clinical teacher education. Liaisons discussed observation protocols; implementation of common core standards; the scaffolding of instruction, including lesson and unit design; and the support necessary for teacher inquiry projects (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009).

The group jointly planned and implemented several focal seminars for interns or student teachers across partner school sites each semester.

Twelve out of 15 EELG liaisons participated in this study in some capacity. Two of the liaisons who did not participate had left the university for other positions. The other was traveling internationally and not supervising students the year the study was conducted. As noted in Table 1, the participants included tenure-track faculty, clinical faculty, and adjunct liaisons. Eleven of the 12 participants completed the survey with demographic data entered. Details for the missing participant were gathered via interview. The group also varied as to their official positions in the COE. All but one participant also had teaching responsibilities in the teacher education program. Each member of the group had classroom teaching experience, with nine of the participants also having prior supervision experience of teacher candidates in other contexts. Two of the participants had been mentor teachers for the program at some point. Areas of certification and/or academic expertise varied widely among the participants. Two of the 12 participants were men, and all but 1 were Caucasian. All of these positions and perspectives influenced the social capital through relationships and networks of influence and decision making.

The Inquiry Team

As in other studies of group processes in teacher education (e.g., Peck, Gallucci, & Sloan, 2010), some participants in this study were also members of the research team that set inquiry questions and that gathered, analyzed, and reported data addressing these questions. We three team members thus straddled roles as researchers

Table 1
Characteristics of Elementary Education Liaison Group Participants

Current positions held at the university	Prior experiences	Areas of expertise and certifications represented in the EELG group
Tenure-track faculty		
2 full professors	100% former classroom	Literacy; secondary English;
1 associate professor	teachers with an average	teacher education;
1 assistant professor	of 18 years' experience	educational psychology
Non-tenure-track faculty		
2 clinical faculty[a]	2 experienced as mentor	Child development;
3 special lecturers[a]	teachers;	math specialist; history;
2 adjunct liaisons	9 had prior supervision	technology; special education;
	experience	bilingual and multicultural;
		library media specialist;
		gifted and talented;
		administration

[a] All five of these participants were doctoral candidates at the same time that they were liaisons.

and participants of the EELG during this inquiry. Two of us—experienced tenure-track faculty responsible for teaching, liaison work, scholarship, and service—were the teacher education leadership participants who initiated and facilitated EELG meetings. The third research team member was a recently graduated doctoral candidate who had been involved in liaison work for the prior 3 years.

We were aware of the challenges and ethics posed in these dual roles. These ranged across methodological issues, such as who should lead focus groups to get trustworthy data and how to bracket our own understandings of the group to get to the heart of issues. For instance, we decided to exclude the two EELG facilitators from participation in initial focus group meetings. We used pseudonyms in our transcriptions, data analyses, and reporting to create distance between our individual experiences and those of the group as a whole. Central to our methodology were collaborative processes of analysis and dialogue. Triangulation of data between the three of us served to strengthen findings. Furthermore, we conducted member checks to verify themes.

Through such bracketing, we perceived the significance of deepening understandings of the collaborative work we do with others in the EELG. We advocate purposeful examination of collective work done by teacher educators to best inform the field with increased rigor and accountability in teacher education programs. Our final EELG data collection session, in which we gathered information to address the themes arising from the data, involved the full complement of EELG participants. We took legitimate roles as participants, careful to express our ideas in these roles alone. Our individual understandings and experiences were thus woven into the collective data. Spanning the boundaries between roles of practitioner and researcher can foster intersections, "creating unique opportunities for reflection on and the improvement of teacher education" (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007, p. 6).

Procedures, Data Sources, and Data Analysis

To construct our case, we moved iteratively between gathering and analyzing data. Findings thus emerged through several cycles of questioning and analysis of responses, in which questions to participants became more focused and refined. We moved from macro to micro levels to further understand emerging themes and drill down to the heart of the themes that emerged.

We first gathered data in the form of an anonymous survey of the EELG. Eleven of the 15 members responded. This survey elicited background information (e.g., experiences as K-8 classroom teachers), general perceptions of the group's purposes and interactions, and perceptions of the potential outcomes for teacher education practices. We individually coded and memoed emerging themes from these data. We then met jointly to discuss the emerging themes—both consistencies and inconsistencies. Additionally, analysis of the quantitative sources created quantitative–qualitative linkages (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as we took frequency counts and created other data displays.

We then generated questions for three distinct focus groups: (a) the two originators–facilitators of the monthly meetings, (b) two doctoral candidates who had been mentored into liaison work by the original facilitators, and (c) participants at all other levels of involvement. These different groups could focus on interactions and relationships based in positions of mentor–mentee and participant. We used both the themes that emerged from the survey and the distinct nature of the groups to generate the next round of questions. For example, from the survey data on collaboration, we created extending and clarifying questions for the focus groups to probe for elaborations and examples of collaborations taking place both inside and outside of scheduled meetings. Because we wanted to get a sense of the history of the group from the two originators, we generated specific open-ended questions for this focus group. Focus groups were either facilitated by an advanced doctoral candidate who was not involved either as a liaison or a researcher or by the third research team member. Focus group discussions ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in length. Each was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

We individually coded the transcripts for salient findings through frequency word counts, noting individual nuances in responses, and aggregating codes for themes across individual experiences. Individual (re)reading and informal coding of our written reflections of the data through methods of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) led into our data memoing and discussions. Together we delved into the data to identify and discuss agreed-upon emerging themes and where we needed further information from our participants. The six themes that emerged were as follows: (a) how we defined collaboration, (b) our commonalities, (c) our differences, (d) the ways our roles in the university (e.g., tenure-track faculty, doctoral students) affected interaction with the group, (e) perceived tensions within the group, and (f) effect on individual practice and the program. We then delved further into these themes through whole-group questioning and a small-group task that engaged participants in a focused discussion about these themes. This EELG meeting yielded a 40-minute audio recording and written artifacts from participants. The recording was transcribed. Both the transcription and the written data were again coded through inductive processes, as refined understandings of our themes emerged. We again wrote memos and discussed our findings together, using data displays and creating graphic organizers (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to aid in making sense of the data. We used the theoretical framework of professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) and our enactment of an inquiry stance in a community of practice to refine the initial themes. The three-way discussion kept us engaged with mutual understandings and apprised of any disconfirming evidence. Finally, we wrote a summary of our case findings and submitted this to our participants for a member check (Glesne, 2006).

Limitations
Limitations for this study included the small participant sample; however, as we

were focused on the site of one EELG, we worked to dig deeper into one particular case. We also were three participant–researchers in this study. Our data meetings, triangulation of data, and member checks were intended to protect against any participant bias. We engaged in only 1 year of data collection and analysis—although many participant reflections spanned the history of the group. Our findings are intended to suggest possibilities for teacher educator professional development based on the rich description and analysis of one case.

Building and Sustaining Professional Capital in a Community of Practice

Investigating the influences of EELG participation on individual and program development, our analyses led to the identification of three key findings connected to the questions on participant experiences of development in this community and the resulting influences on program change. First, embracing shared knowledge and diversities included demonstrating an appreciation of these attributes. Participant data demonstrated the importance of social capital, interaction, and relationships in embracing multiple perspectives for individual development. This appreciation led to individual development in a variety of positions, from doctoral candidate to full professor. Second, distributed leadership and enactment was an outcome of the first finding in terms of EELG participants taking leadership roles no matter what their position in the university. Likewise, this work emphasized an active nature where liaisons took ideas and enacted them right away, empowering the social network through action and support. Third, collective activity led to program change and external influence as much as the internal, individual influences. We elaborate on these findings in the following.

Community Process as an Embrace of Shared Knowledge and Diversities

For work as a social network, liaison efforts were focused on sharing knowledge and engaging in professional development and program improvement together. Participants embraced shared knowledge and divergent perspectives, allowing for a sense of trust in this community of practice where liaisons worked together for successful outcomes, even if enacted differently. Liaisons did not always have to agree to trust that collective interaction would result in positive program change. The EELG meetings, however, began without this sense of community. At first, supervisor meetings, run by an administrative field experience coordinator, began as a space to share logistical information. Gulfs existed between the group members' investments in teacher education and ensuing practices. Adjuncts were perceived as different and a lesser class by tenured faculty, as their connection to the university was tenuous. They did not teach courses. Doctoral students were rarely engaged in supervision. When this coordinator abruptly left her position, two tenure-track

faculty members who served as liaisons to partner schools leapt at the opportunity to become the co-leaders of the group. Their intent was to develop commitment and capacity in university supervisors to foster quality professional-year experiences for all teacher candidates. Meeting agendas demonstrated a focus more on professional development and collaboration (e.g., types of feedback provided to teacher candidates, topics for candidate seminars, observation tools) as opposed to logistical information (e.g., submitting travel reimbursement and final assessment forms).

As new purposes evolved, liaisons recognized the need to develop the social network through the ways the group interacted to effect individual and program improvement. This theme in data sources suggested that the previously mentioned practices demonstrated a move away from initial hierarchical structures to ways of sharing and distributing information, responsibility, and power. As one participant, Judy, described, the meetings had changed from "we would hear almost every month about something that should be initiated and then some stories and policies, but not much initiative going forward" (EELG Focus Group [FG] 1, July 2013, p. 2) to the current structure "being driven more toward what our needs were rather than someone imposing an agenda on us" (EELG FG1, July 2013, p. 2). The EELG met monthly and invited agenda items based on participant feedback. The "needs" Judy mentioned included a sharing space titled "whoops and ah-ha's" to open each meeting, resource sharing of observation forms or ideas for seminars, and task force initiatives such as revising field guides or creating a curriculum for mentor teacher workshops.

The EELG endeavored to give voice to all involved, including adjunct faculty and doctoral students. As a group, liaisons agreed on norms for collaboration to move forward most productively in an environment of increased accountability for teacher educators and within the ambiguities of distributed leadership within a hierarchical institution. EELG meetings were framed around sharing experiences and asking questions for refining practice. An example of such moments included the way in which each meeting opened with "whoops and ah-ha's" as the first item on each agenda. Liaisons consistently commented on the importance of this space and the ways in which allowing the sharing of experiences and hearing multiple perspectives informed practice. Rachel shared, "One thing that is great in this group is that a lot of stuff happens, but I think it happens because I think we are allowed to say whether we want to be in particular subcommittees or groups" (EELG FG ALL, August 2013, p. 6).

Not surprisingly, ambiguities of distributed leadership (Martin et al., 2012) persisted in this context. Tensions also persisted in work as an EELG. Some members began to take note of the almost voluntary nature of our community. Those who wished to participate did so more fully than others. Lora described it this way: "One diversity that we don't have within the group is people who don't value. . . . It seems like they self-select outside" (EELG FG ALL, August 2013, p. 2). Even with the majority of liaisons demonstrating their commitment through survey responses, some liaisons still felt slightly excluded. One focus group participant
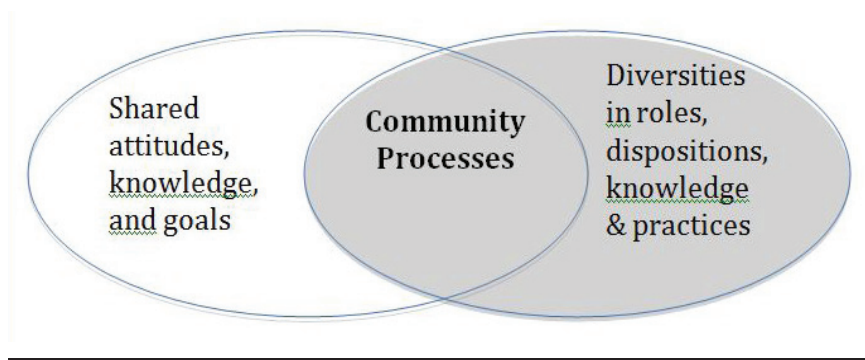
mentioned that she worried about being negatively evaluated for her different types of work in the program. There were times when liaisons may have felt like they "were doing it wrong" (field notes, August 22, 2013) after sharing information in meetings. Molly described her feelings after some meetings:

> I don't have the time, and I don't have the energy so do I even belong here. It has even made me think OK, even though I was a teacher for so long and I think I have a lot to give my student teachers, if I can't give them as much as other people appear to be giving—and I know this is our public self—then maybe I need to not do it. (EELG FG ALL, August 2013, p. 4)

When this was discussed as a group, James shared, "And how can you make that person that maybe does have a little bit of a different viewpoint or different approach feel welcome to balance things out a little bit?" (EELG FG ALL, August 2013, p. 4). The public nature of the EELG and transparency of practice likely also contributed to a sense of felt difference. Varied relationships and interactions demonstrated that shared attitudes could still be felt among the cacophony of diversities. A sense of coming together around shared knowledge and commitment and sticking together through divergent perspectives proved to be a key theme in data sources, as exemplified in Figure 1.

Data analyses demonstrated shared attitudes among participants in the EELG. Liaisons agreed that K-8 students were the "bottom line" of shared work in terms of candidate preparation and its focus on elementary student learning and growth. The EELG emphasized a co-teaching model (Bacharach, n.d.; St. Cloud University, 2011) for candidates and mentor teachers. Unity around this model allowed all to take collective responsibility for candidates and elementary students. Liaison work expanded beyond a solely university or school context; all of the people involved highlighted human capital around a shared understanding of elementary student growth. This belief in clinical practice and the importance of partnering with schools, along with an appreciation for differences among our approaches,

Figure 1
Intersections of Shared Understandings and Diversities

allowed us to engage the shared commitment with different visions of enactment. Carissa shared,

> My goal is to integrate myself into the culture of the schools so that it is not a big deal when I am there. I can walk in and out of classrooms and the teachers don't get nervous and the student teachers don't get nervous and the kids are familiar with me and it's no big deal because I have been there before. (EELG FG2, July 2013, p. 5)

Carissa's sentiment was one felt by the majority of the EELG.

As previously noted in Table 1, liaisons had different areas of expertise. Kirsten described this negotiation by contrasting it from a concessionary or "groupthink" mentality. She described it as

> not a "fine, let's do it the group's way" but it is some kind of a sense of belief and trust in the group decision that you think, "Wow! I am not sure I would have tried this but that is what we decided and I am going to try it because I believe that that will be best." (EELG FG ALL, August 2013, pp. 1-2)

Liaisons exemplified a willingness to try new things together. They engaged in multiple revisions of field guides for clinical practice, used new observation forms after sharing them in EELG meetings, and participated in the Danielson Group's Frameworks for Teaching (http://www.danielsongroup.org) training together. The work liaisons did was active, engaged, and geared to improving teacher candidate experiences. Liaisons demonstrated a sense of agency in accomplishing change in the program. Liaisons with a persistent presence in partner schools generated more agency in suggesting and facilitating program changes at the university. This agency was often attributed to participation and action in the EELG.

Liaisons volunteered to do things whether they were a graduate student or a professor. Although this may appear to demonstrate an "equality" (i.e., shared attitude), there was a felt difference in terms of power and position (e.g., mentor-mentee). James described his first year as a liaison:

> I think Kirsten and I are just working through this five years later. . . . I was sitting there going "I can do this . . ." Kirsten . . . knew what to do and she was the experienced one at supervising. So I would defer to her so there was scaffolding going on but it was on the fly. . . . I felt very confident . . . but at the same time, is this what the university expects? Is this what Kirsten would do? . . . So there was that push-pull and I was constantly for a while looking for affirmation from Kirsten. (EELG FG M, July 2013, p. 4)

This description was a powerful example of the sharing of attributes in a passion for the field while at the same time noting differences in perceived expectations and roles within the university and partner school contexts. This interaction of shared attributes and diversities in a community of practice also influenced the nature of relationships, distributed leadership, and emphasis on action.

Distributed Leadership and Enactment

The data clearly demonstrate all liaisons taking action—either in their individual school sites or on group task forces. Having a voice in constructing important program documents and processes enhanced self-efficacy. With a sense of agency, EELG members demonstrated increased capacity to take action and a larger degree of decisional capital. Evidence indicated that EELG participants felt more comfortable in their work when they had opportunities to share and problem solve together, contributing to both individual and group feelings of efficacy. One of the most powerful findings from interviews was the appreciation of being able to "problem solve" issues in individual work with rest of the group (Levine, 2011). Liaisons left the university–program context to work within individual partner schools and districts and may often have felt as if they were "on their own." However, the initial sharing that was a part of each EELG meeting resulted in feelings of validation and support for the collective work done in individual contexts. Powerful problem-solving moments, where collaborative energy improved all participant understandings of roles, demonstrated a commitment and willingness to share responsibility. These discussions resulted in templates for candidate performance plans and feedback on how to support struggling or successful candidates in a variety of contexts.

There was also shared power among the two group leaders and among distribution of tasks. Lora was an originator of the EELG and had even attempted stabs at sharing practices in the early version of supervisor meetings—before the prior field experience coordinator left her position. She said, "I really wanted us to develop professionalism around supervision" (EELG FAC, June 2013, p. 3). Her desire to develop professionalism as a group played a role in the evolution of distributed activity. Kirsten said, "People aren't waiting to be told what to do necessarily . . . people in the group are pretty comfortable speaking up" (EELG FAC, June 2013, p. 5). As co-facilitators of the EELG for several years, Lora and Kirsten both agreed they were pleased with how many people participated in the task forces created from the group. For instance, Lora evidenced this point by crediting Rachel for describing some of her practices and prompting Lora to dig deeper into her own thinking about lesson planning. Lora took these ideas and ran with them in her own context and came back and shared with the EELG, and eventually groups of liaisons were working together to implement lesson design using Lora's plans based on Rachel's initial ideas. This shared construction of knowledge also generated from a distribution of power and leadership where different members were willing to share and learn from all other members.

Other data excerpts demonstrating a distribution of leadership around enactment included first-year liaisons creating pilot structures for the internship. From their own work they determined interns were struggling with course work and began generating ideas for new structures or corequisite courses to support teacher candidates. Additionally, ownership and responsibility for the EELG's focus on mentor development was not lost when one faculty member left the group to move

on to other work. Without being asked, two clinical faculty members jumped in and began leading mentor teacher meetings, developing social networks for the mentor teachers, and gaining input for mentor professional development. Table 2 highlights the survey data indicating that liaisons believed their sense of efficacy and growing competencies were based in the work of the EELG.

Table 2 data indicate overwhelming support for the EELG influence on individual liaison development and its effect on work in the field. All participants strongly agreed that EELG interaction was responsible for their individual development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, along with influencing program change.

The growing competency of EELG members was evidenced in the tasks they completed as a group. Liaisons defined themselves as "action-oriented," and as can be seen in Table 2, they attributed actions, understandings, and personal growth to participation in the EELG. One liaison shared, "We do more than discuss good ideas" (author analysis meeting, August 2013). At different times, different people would lead a task force or revision group. Lora shared, "One of the reasons it is successful is because the people who have to do the processes are also involved in

Table 2
Reported Influences of the Elementary Education Liaison Group
on Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions About Preservice Teacher Supervision

	n	*M*	*SD*	Variance	Range Potential	Actual	Agree
Developed knowledge and understandings	10	4.8	0.42	0.18	1-5	4-5	100%
Dispositions and conceptual framework	10	4.6	0.52	0.27	1-5	4-5	100%
Clinical supervisions skills and practices	10	4.7	0.48	0.23	1-5	4-5	100%
Professional growth and development	10	4.7	0.48	0.23	1-5	4-5	100%
Self-reflection and change to practice	10	4.8	0.42	0.18	1-5	4-5	100%
Impacts preservice teacher field experiences	8	4.8	0.46	0.21	1-5	4-5	100%

the decision-making things" (EELG FAC, June 2013, p. 10). The EELG piloted new ideas for seminars, field guide revisions, culminating activity work samples, inquiry projects, and admission processes and then took these ideas and activities to the unit overall for consideration. Most people within the Teacher Education Unit would agree that many of the policy decisions have come from the EELG. This decisional capital is highlighted in survey responses, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3 highlights the idea that the actions liaisons took individually and within the group were also influencing other programs, faculty members, or work outside the EELG. A primary finding connected to this study was that the professional development in which teacher educators engage can have an influence on their impact on individual, program, and systems change. Survey respondents unanimously agreed that their decisions made a difference in teacher candidate experiences. There was also large agreement that decisions influenced program change and elementary student experiences. This last connection is the perception of respondents rather than being based in authentic elementary student data.

EELG Processes Result in Program Change and Outcomes

Our study of this community of practice to determine potential internal and external influences led to uncovering how work in the EELG resulted in larger program and systems change in this context. Evidence of individual professional development was strongly supported by multiple data sources and had a "snowball" effect in the elementary education program. The EELG informed changes across the larger Teacher Education Unit.

With the purpose of the EELG shifting to professional development, new agenda items appeared in meetings, including presentations from colleagues (e.g., Smarter Balanced Assessment and new assessment criteria for P–12 schools and integrating content-specific supervision practices and feedback; Valencia, Martin, Place, &

Table 3
Reported Dispositions About Collaborative Decision Making
and Actions of the Group

	n	M	SD	Variance	Range Potential	Actual	Agree
Decisions make a difference for teacher candidates	10	4.60	.52	0.27	1-5	4-5	100%
Decisions influence program change	8	4.25	1.0	1.10	1-5	2-5	88%
Decisions make a difference for K-8 students	8	4.30	1.0	1.10	1-5	2-5	88%

Grossman, 2009). The EELG also had several subgroup task forces emerging. For example, the EELG was responsible for revising the Professional Year Assessment and the Elementary Education Field Guide for all candidates. Liaisons engaged in curriculum changes for the program and participated in program admission processes, which have had a more external influence on multiple programs across the unit. Presently, liaisons are engaging in shared training on an effective teaching framework (Danielson, 2013) and its influence on feedback to candidates, observation tools, and assessment systems. These multiple and complex efforts indicate EELG professional development activities as interactive in their connection to one another and also in creating coherent programs connected to local, state, and national initiatives (Garet, Porter, Desimone, & Birman, 2001).

Kirsten described how she viewed the process:

> We were just a group who wanted to get together and do stuff. Now we are a group who seriously were effecting change in programs unintentionally. But part of that is because we are willing to do the work and we have the ownership and agency so we revised the field guides and assessments. We said this is what we are doing, this is what we decided, and other people are saying okay, sounds good. (EELG FAC, June 2013, p. 10)

The influences of the group were internal and, to an extent, external. For example, EELG members read an article with an emphasis on content-focused supervision feedback. James and Kirsten shared how they found themselves pushing each other to provide more discipline-based feedback to candidates after reading this article Lora coauthored on the role of subject-specific feedback to teacher candidates. At the same time, EELG members asked Sean to lead a seminar on mathematics pedagogy so that they could feel more comfortable providing feedback when observing mathematics instruction. The EELG collaborated in a book study of a text written about the Common Core State Standards in English language arts. Administrators in the college also requested copies of the book so that they could become informed on a focus of EELG work.

With all of these internal influences occurring, liaisons found that many decisions for the elementary education program were also adopted in other programs. As elementary education representatives went to the Unit Governing Council with decisions to interview applicants to teacher education or with a request to raise grade point average (GPA) admission requirements, other programs also adopted an interview process and raised GPA standards for admission. As liaisons became more comfortable within this community of practice, they felt more empowered to share EELG work outside of this community. In this way, professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) expanded into other arenas as community process allowed for *individual development*, *group development*, and then *program development*.

Implications for Teacher Educator Professional Development

Through this inquiry, we identify a need for teacher educators to participate in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) to engage professional growth and define professional knowledge frameworks for teacher educators (Goodwin & Kosnick, 2013). This development should happen in communities of practice to support social network theory, as the clinical work of teacher education is done in multiple contexts across sites of teaching and learning. This social networking could lead to deeper program change and individual development when social capital is acknowledged in ways that enhance decisional capital.

Engaging in an examination of teacher educator identity and life (Day, 2012), EELG participants demonstrated a connection among research, practice, and policy contexts. To generate deeper spheres of influence, a focus on professional capital is necessary. Teacher educators should recognize human, social, and decisional capital within communities of practice as a key step in generating the professional capital necessary for program and individual development and change. With an emphasis on teacher educator professional development, teacher educators highlight their own sense of efficacy and agency in making a difference in teacher education. In a political climate where teacher education is presented as "an industry of mediocrity" (Keller, 2013), teacher educator professional development must provide the cultivation and space for teacher educators as public intellectuals who are willing to engage and enact change at individual, program, and institutional levels (Cochran-Smith, 2006). This development of agency through enacting decision capital could lend itself to larger teacher educator influence through social networks and recognized expertise.

Internal and external influences of this EELG also have implications for teacher educator professional development based in intentionality and mentoring in terms of growing capacity and professional capital. EELG member agency was supported and cultivated in community. Although some liaisons may have had their individual ideas, the EELG found it had more power in collective activity. The EELG increased human, social, and decisional capital to increase program rigor and the transformation of teacher education in this context. Teacher educators may learn from Day (2012) that it is important to be "active always in checking out and giving voice to the connections, at all levels, between policy, research, and practice, and most of all to become and remain, with integrity and passion . . . 'recklessly curious'?" (p. 22).

The EELG maintained a focus on inquiry and the cultivation of a growth mind-set (Dweck, 2008). These frameworks allowed for the embrace of multiple perspectives and a shared purpose to create the best opportunities for teacher candidates in the program. Liaisons were willing to try something new and to return to it—again and again—to refine it for the most effective practice. This phenomenon was not cultivated intentionally. The EELG did not set out to change entire systems and other programs. However, its willingness to enact change collectively did influ-

ence programs outside the EELG. Considering this unintentional outcome, teacher educator professional development should cultivate this mind-set and human capital to effect the transformation of educator preparation in meaningful, complex ways. This EELG dynamic included a sense of individual agency (and growth), community agency (and development), and programmatic change (and improvement). Teacher educators need to recognize social networks—interactions and relationships—within teacher educator professional development and their potential influences as important for maintaining relevance and rigor in the field at large.

Likewise, identifying communities of practice as a powerful space for teacher educator professional development emphasizes the need for valuing those who work in clinical teacher education. They cannot be considered less than those who teach in or research teacher education programs and practices. Findings in this study indicate an emphasis on the mentoring and inclusion of doctoral candidates and clinical faculty with tenure-track teacher educators. This research indicated an appropriate focus or scaffolding of professional development and mentoring opportunities across positions in the field made a difference in individual and program change. Institutional structures that focus on the relationships of partners across and outside of the university helped to support teacher educators and their partner schools, as did the openness and vulnerability necessary for all partners (Snow-Gerono, 2005). The collaborative nature of this work within a hierarchical structure lent itself to feelings of shared understandings and diversities. How do teacher educators engage in consensus toward program work within the larger system of a Teacher Education Unit?

Clinical supervisor and liaison professional development matters (Levine, 2011). If teacher education is "under attack," we teacher educators owe it to ourselves to examine why and how this may have occurred. Teacher educators must share the promising practices in their work and engage in specific professional development. When teacher educators cultivate professional capital with/in each other, it allows for collective activity to continue in hierarchical and accountability-driven contexts. The development of professional capital may lend itself to the teacher educator as a public intellectual and further individual, program, and systems change in programs everywhere.

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