

Developing Social Capital of Community College Developmental Education Faculty to
Influence Student Success

by

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ABSTRACT

Community colleges are open access institutions, striving to meet the needs of all students regardless of level of academic preparation or achievement. Community college student enrollment continues to rise; however, the success of community college students has not increased accordingly. A significant number of students begin at community colleges academically underprepared, placing into developmental level courses in English, reading, and math. Success rates for students in developmental level courses, however, lag behind success rates of students enrolled in college-level courses.

To improve course success rates and the overall success of students in developmental level courses, I designed a professional development experience to strengthen developmental education faculty members' social capital, connecting faculty with peers who also teach developmental level courses. Twelve full-time faculty members participated in an interdisciplinary Professional Learning Network (PLN), where they engaged in shared critical dialogue and conducted and received a peer observation.

I designed a mixed methods action research study where participants completed a pre- and post-survey measuring the influence of this professional development experience on their social capital and their use of effective teaching practices. Additionally, participants completed reflective journal responses, and I interviewed six participants to determine if participation in the PLN and conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation would transform their teaching practice.

Quantitative results indicated that participation in the PLN had little influence on developing participants' social capital and little influence on transforming teaching

practice. The qualitative data indicated that participants' confidence in their teaching practice increased. Participants' social capital was strengthened as they developed an informal support network that grew from a sense of trust and common purpose. Furthermore, interacting with instructors from a different discipline expanded their ideas about effective teaching practices. Ultimately, participation in the PLN and conducting and receiving a peer observation led some participants to consider a transformation of individual teaching practices and in a few instances, modifications to teaching philosophy.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Kristie, thank you for everything. I could not have completed this program without your love, support, and encouragement over the past three years. You were always the positive energy I needed to convince myself I could do this. Thank you for believing in me.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT	1
Local Context.....	2
Developmental Education.....	3
Faculty who Teach Developmental Courses.....	4
2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
Transformative Learning Theory	7
Social Capital	9
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	13
Participants.....	14
Innovation	15
Researcher Role	19
Research Questions.....	20
Research Design.....	20
Instruments and Data Collection.....	21
4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....	28
Quantitative Analysis and Results	28
Qualitative Analysis and Results	37
Assertions.....	43

CHAPTER	PAGE
5 DISCUSSION	55
Overview and Summary	55
Limitations	58
Lessons Learned.....	60
Implications for Practice	63
Implications for Future Research.....	66
Personal Reflections and Closing Thoughts	68
REFERENCES	70
APPENDIX	
A INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	73
B DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION FACULTY SURVEY	76
C DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION FACULTY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	81
D PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK MEETING JOURNAL PROMPTS.....	84
E INTERDISCIPLINARY PEER OBSERVATION GUIDE	87

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Professional Learning Network Activity Outline	17
2. Three-Phase Observation Protocol	19
3. Interview Word Count and Length	27
4. Pre-and Post-Survey Scores for Faculty Connections Items	31
5. Pre-and Post-Survey Scores for Additional Faculty Connections Items	32
6. Pre-and Post-Survey Scores for Effective Teaching Practice Items	35
7. Themes and Assertions Based on Qualitative Data	44
8. Potential Pedagogical Transformations by Teaching Discipline	53

Chapter 1: Introduction and Context

In July 2009, President Barack Obama challenged American community colleges to dramatically increase the number of U.S. citizens to earn an associate degree or higher to once again make America a leader in college graduates (McPhail, 2011).

By 2020, America will once again lead the world in producing college graduates. And I believe community colleges will play a huge part in meeting this goal, by producing an additional 5 million degrees and certificates in the next 10 years (The White House, 2011).

Responding to this call to action, the Association of Community College Trustees, the League for Innovation, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, and Phi Theta Kappa pledged to heed this charge with a renewed commitment to completion. This call to action caused community colleges across the nation to undergo a paradigm shift.

Historically, the focus for community colleges has been open access, with efforts directed toward bringing students into the institution. These efforts have been very successful, as 45% of all undergraduate students were enrolled in a community college in 2012 (National Science Board, 2014). Now, community colleges are shifting their focus to student success, emphasizing the need for mandatory academic support services such as participation in new student orientation, enrolling in a college success course, and taking required placement exams.

This new and important focus on student success has increased attention on the growing number of students enrolling in community colleges who are academically underprepared. Arriving academically underprepared means that students must first complete developmental course(s) in English, reading, or math, which will provide them

with foundational content to prepare them for success in college-level work. Studies from the Community College Research Center estimate that approximately 60% of all students who attend a community college take at least one developmental course (Bailey, 2008). Research also indicates that students who begin their college career in a developmental course are less likely to successfully graduate or transfer to a four-year university than those students who begin community colleges prepared to complete college-level courses (Community College Research Center, 2014). With an emphasis on college success and completion, community colleges must examine their developmental course offerings because to influence the overall success rates of their students, community colleges must do a better job supporting students enrolled in developmental education courses.

Local Context

The focus on student success and completion has had a tremendous influence on Glendale Community College (GCC), one of the ten community colleges within the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD), one of the largest community college districts in the nation. MCCCD is located in Maricopa County, the fourth largest county in the United States, which includes Phoenix and its surrounding cities of Mesa, Glendale, Scottsdale, Chandler, Peoria, and Surprise. To understand the sheer magnitude of this system's size, consider that in academic year 2015-16, approximately 200,000 students enrolled in credit and non-credit courses at a Maricopa County Community College. This is a larger total student population than any single state university in the U.S. Glendale Community College includes two fully-accredited campuses (GCC Main and GCC North) and provides services to more than 32,000 students each year. GCC

employs 272 full-time faculty and also hires approximately an additional 650 part-time faculty each semester.

Developmental Education

GCC, like community colleges across the nation, has seen a steady rise in enrollment over the past decade. Similar to all community colleges, GCC is an open-enrollment institution. Regardless of a student's level of academic skill and knowledge, he or she is able to enroll in and take any number of community college courses. Students, however, are required to complete a college placement exam in order to take college-level English, reading, or math. According to GCC's Research Director, the percentage of students placing in developmental courses has remained high over the years. Since 2012, GCC has seen an increase in the number of students placing into developmental education courses. In fall 2016, 67% of GCC's new degree- or transfer-seeking students placed into at least one developmental level course, with 1 in 6 students (17%) placing into developmental courses in English, math, and reading. Reading and English developmental courses have high enrollment. English 091 (Fundamentals of Writing) had approximately 1,000 enrolled students in fall 2016, while Reading 081 (Reading Improvement) and Reading 091 (College Preparatory Reading) also had approximately 1,000 students enrolled. In addition, approximately 2,000 students enrolled in a developmental math course in fall 2016 (P. Arcuria, personal communication, March 14, 2017).

As the number of students placing into developmental education courses is increasing, the success rates for those particular courses and the overall success rates of

those students have remained relatively low. Over the past five years, the success rates (students earning an A, B, or C) for the developmental courses at GCC were as follows:

- Fall 2011 = 60%
- Fall 2012 = 65%
- Fall 2013 = 63%
- Fall 2014 = 69%
- Fall 2015 = 70%

In comparison, the student success rate in college-credit courses (non-developmental) was 75% for Fall 2015. Colleges across the nation are exploring many strategies to improve developmental course success rates. One example at GCC is that students enrolled in a developmental course are strongly encouraged to enroll in the college success course. Another example at GCC is the upcoming launch of an Early Alert program, designed to inform students early and often of their academic progress in a developmental course. Most of the interventions focus on the student and his or her actions – improving study habits, keeping better track of academic progress, seeking tutoring, or connecting with a mentor. However, GCC leaders also need to examine the role faculty play in influencing the success of students who enroll in developmental level courses.

Faculty Who Teach Developmental Courses

The increase in the number of students placing into developmental education courses, along with the increased focus on student success, has placed a greater spotlight on understanding who is teaching students in developmental courses and how are they

doing so. Currently, 272 of the 973 faculty members at GCC are full-time; however, full-time faculty teach approximately 51% of the total course load. For developmental education courses, approximately 50 full-time faculty members teach at least one developmental course, equaling 30% of all developmental education course load leaving the majority of courses to be taught by adjunct faculty. Consequently, developmental education courses are taught primarily by part-time faculty.

Historically, academic leadership of GCC has not taken significant steps to enhance the professional development of the developmental instructor, nor has the organization made significant strides to connect developmental instructors to each other to engage in common professional development experiences. Many faculty who teach developmental education courses do not necessarily connect with other instructors who teach similar courses within or across disciplines. Professional development programs at community colleges tend to focus on developing a faculty member's pedagogical skills (Murray, 2001). Additional research by Boyle, White, & Boyle (2004) indicates that effective professional development programs connect faculty to other professionals to engage in peer observation and scholarly dialogue regarding teaching and learning matters. Leana (2011) defines an instructor's ability to connect with another instructor to engage in dialogue and to seek solutions to instructional challenges as an instructor's social capital. Leana (2011) writes that professional development programs should enhance an instructor's social capital because "when social capital is strong—student achievement scores improve" (33). Furthermore, Boylan (2002) explains that quality teaching has a positive influence on the success of developmental education students.

Finally, teachers interacting with other teachers can lead to transformative change in teaching practice (Penlington, 2008). Given that research indicates that teachers interacting with other teachers can transform teaching practice and also improve student achievement, community college leaders and professional development experts must take it upon themselves to explore how to strengthen the social capital of developmental course instructors which can lead to pedagogical transformation and improved student achievement.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review

The goal of my action research project is to transform developmental education teaching practices through faculty members' participation in a professional learning network and the completion of interdisciplinary peer observations. Traditionally, professional development for community college faculty has been inefficiently coordinated and not designed in a strategic manner with the specific needs of faculty in mind (Taylor, 2010). My innovation involved developing a strategic, intentional approach to faculty development by placing developmental education faculty in an interdisciplinary professional learning network to foster collaboration and critical reflection about each other's teaching practice. Furthermore, faculty conducted and received an interdisciplinary peer observation to experience a new teaching and learning environment. This exposure to a new teaching environment, along with the shared interdisciplinary dialogue, was designed to increase faculty connections with each other and to ultimately transform teaching practice to influence student success. Therefore, I designed the innovation using the following two theoretical frameworks as a guide: transformative learning theory and social capital theory.

Transformative Learning Theory

Adults create habits of mind or establish frames of reference based on life experiences, beliefs, and assumptions (Cranton & King, 2003). In education, instructors tend to create habits of instruction based on teaching methods that they were exposed to during their educational experiences (Martin & Double, 1998). Consequently, instructors may teach as they have been taught. These more traditional teaching methods may not

align with the needs of today's learners, so transforming teaching practice, or transforming instructor learning, can be one strategy to influence student success. Mezirow introduced the concept of transformative learning in 1975. The theory provides a model as to how adults learn. When something occurs that is not congruent with a particular belief or assumption, the adult learner questions why the new experience does not fall within the established frame of reference. This is a natural process where adults begin to think critically about their own beliefs and attitudes. Mezirow's (1997) theory states that this critical reflection is needed to transform attitudes and beliefs, and serves as a means to explain new experiences. He contends that adults then seek discourse to understand what has occurred and to make new meaning. Transformation occurs when an individual critically examines a frame of reference, explores a new way of thinking or believing, and ultimately changes a behavior or belief.

Transformative learning theory has been the theoretical framework applied to many case studies related to faculty professional development in higher education. King (2004) conducted a mixed methods research study and analyzed the professional development of 58 adult educators from two-year colleges, universities, and nursing schools as well as adult educators in other settings, to determine if transformation occurred, that is implementation of new teaching practices as determined by the instructors, and to understand the types of learning activities that fostered transformation. King concluded that activities such as discussion, journals, reflection, and readings contributed to transformation of participants' instructional practice. The study revealed

the importance of providing an opportunity for educators to participate in learning experiences that foster critical reflection and questioning.

Similarly, Eisen (2001) used transformative learning theory as her theoretical framework to complete a case study of community college faculty participating in a peer-based professional development program. This study involved twenty participants in the Connecticut Community-Technical College's Teaching Partners Program (TPP) from 1991-1996. TPP included teaching pairs participating in classroom observations of each other, holding feedback sessions, and critically reflecting on their practice as part of this program. The author conducted interviews with the teaching participants, reviewed written reports, and analyzed teacher reflections. By creating a space for discourse, which is critical to Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory, teachers were able to gain insights to their teaching through critical dialogue with a trusted peer (Eisen, 2001). Furthermore, participants in this study engaged in peer observation, which created a disorienting experience as faculty assumed a different role while in a classroom, that of observer. The conclusions of these studies support that a transformation of teaching practice can occur through critical reflection and peer observation in a supportive, voluntary, and trusting peer model.

Social Capital

As transformative learning theory can apply to faculty professional development, effective professional development can also be viewed through a social capital lens. Social capital focuses on an individual's networks and relationships. Bourdeiu (1986) defined *social capital* as the network of relationships one establishes that can be useful in

attaining short-term or long-term goals. Coleman (1998) further develops the concept of social capital, describing it as relations among people that can lead to productive activity. He also introduces social structures that facilitate the development of social capital: closure, stability, dependence, and shared ideologies. Additionally, Coleman writes that the significance of social capital often leads to the development of human capital for the next generation. Or in other words, as parents develop their social capital, the benefit to that development can be found in increased human capital for their children. Finally, Woolcock (2001), in the context of sustainable economic development, describes social capital in much more familiar terms – an individual’s network of friends, family, and associates. Social capital, through an educational lens, can be viewed as a faculty member’s network of relationships and connections in order to strengthen his or her ability to be an effective instructor.

In a recent article detailing strategies to reform public schools, Leana (2011) contends that professional development for educators should not focus exclusively on developing human capital of the individual instructor. However, professional development should also foster the development of an instructor’s social capital, the network an instructor relies on to answer student questions, discover new teaching ideas, seek suggestions to classroom management challenges, and continue to grow within his or her content field. To further understand the influence of social capital, Leana participated in a large project involving elementary school teachers in New York City public schools. She interviewed teachers to better understand how social capital works in these particular schools, and to understand the influence of both human and social capital

on student success. She concluded that the students of teachers with high skill level performed better than those students taught by teachers of lower skill level. However, Leana also found that students who were taught by teachers with strong social capital were the top performers within this study. Findings showed that “teacher social capital was a significant predictor of student achievement gains above and beyond teacher experience or ability in the classroom” (Leana, 2011, p. 33). The results of this study lend support that an educational institution should consider strategies and initiatives that would enhance an instructor’s social capital, as instructors with strong social capital have higher student achievement rates.

Development of social capital within instructors has been explored in other contexts as well. For example, Mandzuk, Hasinoff, & Seifert (2005) examined student cohorts in teacher education programs. In their study, the researchers analyzed the social capital of teacher education cohorts by administering a survey to 239 student teachers as well as by conducting focus groups with their instructors. The researchers concluded that developing social capital has benefits; however, this emphasis on social capital is not necessarily always inherently good, as issues of forced dialogue and a tendency for cohort members to behave similarly emerged. The authors questioned whether the emphasis on social capital development negatively influenced the creativity and independent thinking of individuals within the cohort. Finally, they concluded that individuals who were more socially inclined benefitted from a cohort experience, and those that were less socially inclined also benefitted, as the cohort experience forced those individuals to strengthen their social capital.

Ultimately, to transform their teaching practice, developmental education instructors would benefit by strengthening their social capital, as instructors with strong social capital tend to have higher student achievement rates than those instructors with low social capital (Leana, 2011). Faculty members, through experience both in being a student and being an instructor, have established habits of instruction, or in other words, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions about teaching. These attitudes and beliefs may be based on how an instructor was taught in the past or by what the instructor believes is effective teaching (Martin & Double, 1998). These habits of instruction may not have been formed through critical reflection as to whether they are sound and effective instructional practices. However, as Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory states, in order for learning, or in this case professional development, to be transformative, it is critical that independent, autonomous learners critically reflect on their frames of reference, and tap into their social capital, to establish new points of view and new perspectives to grow and transform professionally.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Community colleges have historically focused efforts and resources on open access for students, regardless of a student's previous level of academic preparation or achievement. Community college student enrollment continues to rise; however, the success of community college students, as defined by graduation rates, transfer rates to a four-year university, or certificate completion, has not increased accordingly. Locally, Glendale Community College, one of the ten community colleges within the Maricopa County Community College District, has seen an increase in the number of students placing into developmental education courses. Unfortunately, the success and retention rates for developmental education students continue to lag behind the success and retention rates for students in college-level courses at GCC.

The innovation for my action research study involved strategies to increase the social capital of developmental education faculty to transform their teaching practice to better support student learning and engagement in the classroom. Selected developmental education faculty participated in a professional learning network and conducted and received interdisciplinary peer observations with the goal to influence their teaching practice. Ultimately, many factors contribute to the success of developmental students; however, the role of the instructor is vital as quality teaching has a positive influence on the success of developmental education students (Boylan, 2002). Furthermore, teachers interacting with other teachers can lead to transformative change in teaching practice (Penlington, 2008). Focusing efforts to support developmental education faculty can positively influence student success.

Participants

The increase in the number of students qualifying for developmental education courses, and the renewed emphasis on student success, has highlighted the need to deeply understand the preparation of those who are teaching developmental courses and the effectiveness of their instructional practices. Presently, approximately 270 of the 920 faculty members at GCC are full-time. Approximately 50 full-time faculty members teach at least one developmental course, equaling 30% of the total developmental education course load.

To recruit participants for my action research project, I enlisted the assistance of the GCC developmental education faculty leads for English, reading, and math. I solicited the support of these three individuals to recruit prospective faculty members as I was concerned that my identity and position with GCC at the time of the study as Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs could influence faculty participation. Consequently, I drafted a recruitment email, which included the Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) as an attachment. The three developmental education faculty leads emailed faculty members from their respective disciplines who were scheduled to teach a developmental education course in the fall 2016 semester. In total, 112 residential and adjunct faculty who teach a developmental level course at GCC received an email invitation to participate in the study. The first email was sent the week of May 9 and led to four faculty members completing and submitting to me a completed informed consent form. The three developmental education faculty leads recommended to wait until the week of August 15 when faculty return to full-time work to prepare for the fall semester to recruit additional

participants. The three faculty leads sent follow-up emails at this time, as well as announced this opportunity at their respective department meetings. Participant recruitment ended August 19 at the beginning of the fall semester.

Of the 112 faculty members teaching a developmental education course for GCC in fall 2016 semester, twelve agreed to participate in my action research project. Five of the participants teach developmental English courses, four teach developmental math courses, and three teach developmental reading courses. All participants are full-time faculty, as recruitment efforts were not successful with the part-time faculty who teach developmental education courses for GCC. I informally asked the developmental education faculty leads reasons why adjunct faculty were not willing to participate in the study. According to the developmental faculty leads, common responses were either lack of time or lack of compensation for participation.

The participants for the study are not representative of the overall gender and ethnic diversity of GCC's full-time faculty. First, 67% of faculty participants are female compared to 49% of GCC's overall faculty. Second, 67% of faculty participants are white, compared to 77% of GCC's overall faculty. Seven participants have taught developmental education courses for six or more years. Four participants have taught a developmental education course for one to five years. One participant has taught developmental education courses for less than one year.

Innovation

Success and retention rates for developmental education students lag behind the success and retention rates for students in college-level courses at GCC. Recently, college

leadership implemented a series of interventions to assist in the success and retention of developmental education students. These interventions include having students participate in a new student orientation, receive advisement, and enroll in a college success course designed to promote effective study habits and to develop goal-setting strategies. As the college's efforts have primarily focused on improving students' abilities and skills, the institution has paid less attention to examining the skills and abilities of developmental education instructors to ensure instructors are prepared to meet the needs of the developmental student population. Ultimately, many factors influence the success of developmental students; however, the role of the instructor is vital and focusing efforts to support developmental education faculty can positively influence student success (Boylan, 2002). My innovation, grounded in transformative learning theory and social capital theory, involved a two-pronged faculty professional development approach. The first prong included the formation of a Professional Learning Network; the second prong involved interdisciplinary peer observation.

Professional learning network. The innovation for my action research study involved strategies to increase the social capital of developmental education faculty to transform their teaching practice to better support student learning in the classroom. The twelve developmental education faculty participants formed an interdisciplinary Professional Learning Network (PLN). In the fall 2016 semester, I facilitated three PLN meetings, one per month, with all participants. The goals of these meetings were to build community and establish trust among participants, while also sharing best practices and challenges faculty experience teaching developmental level courses. Trust building and

frequent interaction is critical to developing strong social capital (Leana, 2011), and essential to creating a supporting environment for the interdisciplinary peer observation, the second prong of my innovation. Therefore, I designed the PLN meetings with opportunities for participants to build community and trust. Table 1 outlines the timing and expectations of the PLN meetings.

Table 1

Professional Learning Network Activity Outline

Date	Activity	Activity Goals
9/15/2016	PLN Meeting #1 a) Administer quantitative survey measuring social capital construct b) Discuss reasons for teaching; reasons for teaching dev. ed. courses c) Share teaching philosophies	a) Attain initial measure of social capital construct b) Form relationships c) Build community d) Build trust e) Begin interdisciplinary dialogue
10/15/16	PLN Meeting #2 a) Work with a partner from a different discipline b) Identify and share strengths as an instructor; c) Identify and share areas for growth	a) Build community b) Build trust c) Strengthen interdisciplinary dialogue d) Form partnerships to conduct interdisciplinary peer observations

11/30/16	PLN Meeting #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Administer quantitative survey measuring social capital construct b) Facilitate reflection of the PLN experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Attain measure of social capital construct after PLN and peer observation b) Collect written reflections of the peer observation and PLN experience
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Interdisciplinary peer observation. The second prong of my innovation included participants conducting interdisciplinary peer observations. Each member of the PLN selected a partner from a different discipline to form an interdisciplinary pairing (i.e., an English developmental instructor paired with a math developmental instructor). The partner selection occurred after the second PLN meeting, which allowed participants an opportunity to develop community and build trust with one another. The interdisciplinary peer observation was conducted in three stages: pre-observation meeting, observation, and feedback meeting (Martin & Double, 1998; Sullivan, Buckle, Nicky & Atkinson, 2012). First, each pair participated in a pre-observation meeting where they discussed the expectations of the observation as well as the instructional goal of the class to be observed. Second, each faculty member conducted the observation of the other and recorded field notes of his or her observations. Finally, a post-observation meeting was held where faculty members exchanged feedback regarding the observation. Table 2 outlines the three phases involved in the interdisciplinary peer observation process.

Table 2

Three-Phase Observation Protocol

Meeting	Date	Activities
Pre-observation meeting	To occur from 10/16 to 10/31	Participants to discuss which class they will attend, the purpose of the lesson, and what the peer should focus on during the observation
Observation	To occur from 11/1 to 11/20	Participants to take notes and complete a reflection to be shared with the peer during the post-observation
Post-observation meeting	To occur from 11/21 to 11/30	Participants to share the results of the observation – specifically focusing on strengths and areas for growth

This two-pronged professional development innovation was designed to increase faculty members’ social capital through participation in a professional learning network and interdisciplinary peer observation.

Researcher Role

During the duration of the implementation of the innovation, I was the Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs at GCC. I served as the facilitator for the three PLN meetings, leading the discussion and maintaining a proper pace to conclude the activities within our scheduled timeframe. I sent reminder email messages to participants that included meeting dates and times, as well as a reminder email to complete the interdisciplinary peer observations within the given timeframe. I also conducted six interviews following the three PLN meetings.

Research Questions

To guide my action research project, I designed a research protocol to address the following questions:

1. How and to what extent does participation in an interdisciplinary professional learning network influence developmental education faculty members' perceptions regarding their teaching practice?
2. How does engaging in critical reflection about teaching with faculty from a different discipline influence developmental education faculty members' self-perceptions of their teaching practice?
3. How does conducting and receiving peer observations from a faculty member from a different discipline transform a developmental instructor's teaching practice?

Research Design

The research design for this study was a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). For this study, I concurrently collected both qualitative and quantitative data. I collected qualitative data from six participant interviews, written responses from all participants after each PLN meeting, and participant notes and summaries from the interdisciplinary peer observations. I collected quantitative data from a questionnaire I designed to self-assess participants' perceptions of their knowledge and use of best teaching practices as well as their frequency of participation in various professional networks. I analyzed the two data sets separately, and I compared the results of the data to complement findings. This method for data

analysis aligns with the convergent parallel mixed methods design (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010).

Instruments and Data Collection

For this study, the qualitative instruments were designed to address each research question, specifically how participating in the interdisciplinary professional learning network, engaging in critical reflection, and conducting and receiving peer observations might transform teaching practice. The quantitative survey was designed to focus on the first research question, specifically to address the extent to which participants might transform their practice. I collected four sources of data in order to address my research questions. Below is a brief description of each data source and the rationale for its selection.

Survey. The initial pilot administration of my quantitative survey occurred in spring 2015 in the development phase of my research project. The initial version of the survey included two constructs: effective teaching practices and social capital. The social capital construct included all Likert-scale items regarding the amount of collaboration a faculty member experiences within and outside his or her teaching discipline. In addition, the social capital construct included items related to the faculty member's level of participation in state and national associations. The effective teaching practices construct included four questions each relating to the concepts of active learning, assessment, and culturally inclusive teaching. The spring 2015 survey was administered to faculty at a different community college with the Maricopa County Community College District, as I

did not want to have potential GCC participants complete the survey in advance of actual participation in the dissertation study.

Based on feedback from my dissertation committee as well as my analysis of the initial spring 2015 pilot, I revised the survey in the following manner. First, items related to the social capital construct were divided into two categories – Professional Groups/Networks and Faculty Connections. I made this change as the focus of my innovation is with faculty connections. I did want to garner a sense of a faculty members' network outside of GCC with national and regional associations, as that information informs a faculty member's overall social capital. However, the focus of my innovation is participation in the PLN, which is growing the number of faculty connections for participants. Second, all items in the Professional Groups/Networks sections were changed from Likert-scale items to yes/no response items. This change was made based on feedback from my dissertation committee indicating that those items were a simple yes/no and did not lend participants to having a varying degree of agreement to the response. For example, one question asks participants to indicate if they regularly attend a national conference related to their teaching discipline. This item was revised to a yes/no response given the response does not lend itself to a varying degree of agreement. In summary, the final version of the survey administered in fall 2016 included a majority of items to measure a faculty member's social capital. The items focusing on social capital were divided into two categories – Professional Groups/Networks and Faculty Connections.

I also modified the design of the survey regarding the Effective Teaching

Practices construct. After reviewing feedback and discussion with my dissertation committee from the spring 2015 pilot and during my dissertation proposal defense, I revised the final survey to only include four questions related to the single construct of effective teaching practices. The four effective teaching practices items related to participants' use of active learning strategies, classroom assessment techniques, and culturally inclusive teaching methods. I revised the survey in this manner, as the questions in the initial survey did not align specifically with my research questions. The research questions ask how and to what extent will participation in the PLN transform teaching practice. My research questions do not specifically examine the separate constructs of active learning strategies, classroom assessment techniques, and culturally inclusive teaching methods. Consequently, I decided to reduce the number of questions and focus more generally on effective teaching practices as a single construct. The four questions in the final survey all relate to effective teaching practices and allow me to understand the extent to which participation in the PLN may transform teaching practice.

Finally, the survey included four opening demographic questions asking participants to indicate the frequency in which they teach a developmental level course and the range of years teaching a developmental level course. These items remained unchanged from the spring 2015 administration of the survey to the fall 2016 survey administration.

The Developmental Education Faculty Survey (Appendix B) was administered both before the first PLN meeting and after the third PLN meeting, which was after participants completed and received an observation from a colleague outside their

teaching discipline. Results of the pre- and post-survey directly relate to my first research question, the extent to which participants' self-perceptions regarding their teaching practice were changed after participation in my action research project.

Journaling. The data collected from the quantitative survey helped me to better understand the extent to which each faculty member's perceptions of his or her teaching practice before and after the intervention may have changed (Research Question 1). However, to better understand how participants may transform their teaching practice due to participation in the PLN, critical reflection with peers, and conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation, other data collection methods were needed. The written journal responses were designed to determine how participation in the network and giving and receiving peer observations may transform participants' teaching practice (Research Questions 1, 2 and 3). The written journal responses align with Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory, which serves as the theoretical framework for my study. For transformation to occur, individuals must engage in critical reflection of behaviors and actions. Journaling was a means for participants to critically reflect on their teaching practice with the intent of this reflection leading to a potential transformation of teaching methods or even philosophy.

For my study, participants completed structured journal reflections immediately following each PLN meeting. Participants generally completed the journal reflection prompts (Appendix D) in approximately fifteen minutes. Each participant used a Chromebook that was stored in the meeting room to respond to the reflection questions in SurveyMonkey. The final journal response was collected after the third PLN meeting,

which was also after participants had conducted and received a peer observation. After I collected participants' three journal responses, I exported the responses from SurveyMonkey into an Excel spreadsheet for data analysis. In total, there were approximately 36 pages of text for the three journal responses.

Peer observation guides. Multiple research studies indicate that peer observations are an effective means of professional development (Boyle, et al., 2004; Eisen, 2001). As part of my action research project, participants completed a peer observation of a faculty colleague from a different teaching discipline. The participants themselves collected data through the completion of observation notes. Prior to the start of the research project and in collaboration with my dissertation committee, I decided that as the researcher, I would not conduct nor be present for the observations for two reasons. First, in my role as Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs, I routinely evaluate GCC faculty. Consequently, separating my professional role and my role as researcher in this context would be challenging. My professional identity could influence the outcome of the observation or it could create a sense of fear or anxiety among participating faculty members. Second, I am most interested in the impact of peer-to-peer observation. My presence in the classroom may disrupt the authenticity of the peer observation process.

The peer observation protocol (Appendix E) required faculty to complete a pre-observation response form with their selected partner. This form asked faculty members to identify the context for the class, the specific learning objective or outcome for the class, and a specific strategy or aspect of the class the observer should pay particular attention to. Participants completed this form and met with each other to share

expectations prior to the observation. During the observation, participants completed observation notes on a form that was provided. The observation notes were collected to serve as data for the study. Additionally, observers wrote a summary of the observation, noting the strengths of the lesson as well as areas for growth. The observation notes and the summary are critical data because they allow me to discover if faculty members are alluding to transformational change of their own instruction based on conducting and receiving a peer observation (Research Question 2). The final aspect of the observation protocol required participants to conduct a one-hour post observation meeting, where each participant discussed feedback from the observation. Notes were not required here, as the third journal response focused on the interdisciplinary peer observations. The one-hour post observation meeting helped to prepare participants for the third and final journal reflection.

Interviews. I conducted six semi-structured interviews to gain a better understanding if participation in the PLN influenced or even transformed their teaching practice (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3). Semi-structured interviews are “based on a set of prepared, mostly open-ended questions, which guide the interview and the interviewee” (Flick, 2014, p. 197). I selected two participants from each of the three disciplines to interview. I selected participants based on my determination of who had made significant contributions during the PLN discussions. I interviewed participants after they participated in the three PLN meetings, as well as after having completed the interdisciplinary peer observations. I formulated interview questions (Appendix C), but I asked follow-up or probing questions as well. Interviews were recorded, and four of the

interviews occurred in the faculty members' offices. Two of the interviews were conducted in the same room as where the PLN meetings were held. Interviews ranged in length from approximately 16 - 20 minutes and were digitally recorded amounting to almost two hours of audio files. The interview data was transcribed into six separate documents totaling just over 16,000 words. Table 3 provides a more detailed breakdown of each interview's length and total word count.

Table 3

Interview Word Count and Length

Data Source	Word Count	Minutes
Instructor E3 Interview	2279	17:51
Instructor E5 Interview	2644	18:52
Instructor M3 Interview	3225	18:55
Instructor M4 Interview	3316	20:07
Instructor R1 Interview	2599	19:10
Instructor R2 Interview	2071	16:29
Totals	16,134	1:51:24

These interviews allowed faculty members to tell their story in their voice about participation in the PLN and in conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation. The interviews provided insight to each of my three research questions.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The following chapter describes the process for analyzing both the quantitative and qualitative data. First, I provide the analysis and results for the quantitative data, as the quantitative data specifically address Research Question 1. Next, I share the analysis and results of the qualitative data, as the qualitative data are comprehensive to all three Research Questions.

Quantitative Analysis and Results

In order to ascertain the extent to which participation in an interdisciplinary professional learning network influenced or even transformed developmental education faculty members' perceptions regarding their teaching practice (Research Question 1), I administered an online survey with 25 items. The purpose of administering both a pre- and post-quantitative survey was to determine if faculty participants' perceptions regarding their teaching practice changed or were influenced by participation in the PLN and after conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation. The innovation was designed to make use of and increase instructor social capital based on the belief that instructor social capital can have a positive influence on student success (Leana, 2011). I therefore used the survey to measure initial and post-innovation social capital beyond the PLN. As described in Chapter 3, the quantitative survey was divided into two main constructs – social capital and effective teaching practices.

Social capital. Seventeen survey items focused on participants' social capital. The intent of these questions was to determine an initial baseline of participants' social capital prior to the implementation of the innovation. Items measured participants' social

capital through their internal relationships (i.e., connections with other faculty members in our organization) to connections with national teaching and learning organizations. These responses are useful as the data provide additional insight into Research Question 1. Prior studies have shown that educators who regularly engage in activity with professional networks and groups have stronger social capital, or in other words, those educators have access to an external network to use as a resource regarding their teaching practice (Leana, 2011). Consequently, I included items to gauge my participants' experiences with external networks such as professional associations. Furthermore, research has shown that educators who engage and connect with faculty in teaching and learning matters have stronger social capital (Leana, 2011). Therefore, I included items to ascertain participants' connections to other faculty at GCC. By measuring these items related to social capital, I intended to gain insight if participation in the PLN influenced behaviors to engage in additional professional networks or to seek more faculty connections. In the sections below, I report results of social capital survey, first describing pre and post-responses to items related to professional groups and networks, and then describing responses related to faculty connections.

Professional groups and networks as social capital. This section of the survey included four items asking participants to indicate either *yes* or *no* if they are members of a professional association or network or if they regularly attend national or regional conferences. Responses for the pre-survey indicated that 83% of participants were members of a professional association focused on their teaching field. Similarly, 83% of participants responded that they regularly attend conferences related to their teaching

field. The number of participants who indicated they were members of a professional association related to the field of developmental education or who indicated they attended conferences focused on developmental education teaching practices was fewer, with 50% of participants indicating yes for both items.

Responses to these items in the post-survey administered after the third PLN meeting remained relatively unchanged. The only change was that one participant changed a response from no to yes for the item related to regular attendance at a national or regional conference related to his or her teaching discipline. All other items related to professional groups and networks remained unchanged.

Participants' pre- and post-survey responses indicate that participants are involved with professional groups and networks within their discipline more than they are involved with professional groups and networks dedicated specifically to the field of developmental education. This innovation, however, did little to change participant behaviors regarding professional groups and networks in the three months of participation in the research study. Participant responses did not indicate that they sought additional professional groups and networks either related to their teaching field or to the field of developmental education by the end of the study. Consequently, I conclude that participation in the PLN did little to influence participants' behaviors regarding their involvement with professional groups and networks, at least not in the short-term.

Faculty connections as social capital. To further understand participants' social capital, participants were asked to respond to 13 items focusing on faculty connections and professional relationships at GCC. These 13 items included eight *yes* or *no* items,

along with five Likert-scale items. The pre- and post-survey responses related to Faculty Connections are listed in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Pre- and Post-Survey Scores for Faculty Connections Items

Item	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
I collaborate with developmental education faculty within my discipline on teaching and learning matters.	12 <i>Yes</i> (100%)	12 <i>Yes</i> (100%)
I value collaborating with developmental education faculty within my discipline on teaching and learning matters.	*M = 3.92 SD = 0.29	M = 3.92 SD = 0.29
I collaborate with developmental education faculty outside my discipline on teaching and learning.	9 <i>Yes</i> (75%)	7 <i>Yes</i> (64%)
I value collaborating with developmental education faculty outside my discipline on teaching and learning matters.	M = 3.83 SD = 0.39	M = 3.75 SD = 0.45
I have a colleague in my discipline that I consider a mentor or a coach.	10 <i>Yes</i> (83%)	12 <i>Yes</i> (100%)
I have a colleague in a different discipline that I consider a mentor or a coach.	7 <i>Yes</i> (64%)	9 <i>Yes</i> (75%)

*Note: All Likert responses were on a 4-point scale.

The pre- and post-survey responses indicate that participation in the PLN created a positive change in responses regarding having a colleague both from the same and from a different discipline as a mentor or a coach. At the start of the innovation, seven participants indicated they have a colleague in a different discipline they consider a mentor or a coach; at the conclusion of the innovation, nine participants responded to this same item affirmatively. The new relationships created through the PLN may have

caused two participants to indicate they now have a colleague they would consider a mentor or coach. This finding is important because it indicates participation in this PLN created new faculty connections increasing participants' social capital.

The remaining seven items that were included in the Faculty Connections section of the survey asked participants to indicate their frequency in interacting with other faculty and also their frequency in conducting peer observations. Table 5 includes the responses to the remaining items in the Faculty Connections section.

TABLE 5

Pre- and Post-Survey Scores for Additional Faculty Connections Items

Item	Pre-Survey Responses	Post-Survey Responses
I observe a colleague in my discipline teach a developmental course.	M = 1.75 SD = 1.21	M = 1.92 SD = 1.00
I observe a colleague outside my discipline teach a developmental course.	M = 1.33 SD = 0.88	M = 2.17 SD = 0.72
I interact with other colleagues in my discipline.	M = 4.00 SD = 0.00	M = 3.92 SD = 0.29
I interact with colleagues outside my discipline (both faculty and staff).	M = 3.25 SD = 0.62	M = 3.33 SD = 0.78
Developing positive professional relationships with faculty colleagues at GCC is important to me.	M = 3.83 SD = 0.39	M = 3.92 SD = 0.29
I would like to have more opportunity to engage in teaching and learning conversations.	M = 3.75 SD = 0.45	M = 3.75 SD = 0.45
I would like to have more opportunity to observe colleagues teach a developmental education course.	M = 3.67 SD = 0.49	M = 3.58 SD = 0.51

The responses indicated that participants began the research study with strong faculty connections or in other words, a strong faculty network. Participants were in strong agreement that they collaborate with colleagues within their department on teaching and learning topics (pre-survey $M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.00$; post-survey $M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.29$). All participants were in agreement they interact with colleagues outside their teaching discipline (pre-survey $M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.62$; post-survey $M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.78$). Participants agreed that developing positive professional relationships with faculty colleagues at GCC is important (pre-survey $M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.39$; post-survey $M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.29$). Participants indicated the same level of agreement both before and after the innovation that they would like more opportunity to engage in teaching and learning conversations (pre- and post-survey $M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.45$). Participants also agreed both before and after participation in the PLN they would like more opportunity to observe colleagues teach a developmental education course (pre-survey $M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.49$; post-survey $M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.51$).

However, participants' responses indicated they rarely engage in peer observation, regardless if the peer was within or outside of their teaching discipline (pre-within $M = 1.75$, $SD = 1.21$; pre-outside $M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.88$). The post-survey results showed a slight increase in the frequency of participants observing a colleague outside their discipline teach a developmental course (post-inside $M = 1.92$, $SD = 1.00$; post-outside $M = 2.17$, $SD = 0.72$), which is logical given that each participant engaged in at least one interdisciplinary peer observation through their participation in the research study.

Overall, my innovation did little to change participant perceptions or behaviors regarding faculty connections. All participants began the study expressing agreement regarding the value of professional relationships, peer observation, and shared dialogue. Participation in this research study affirmed this perceived value. Consequently, participation in the PLN had little influence on participants' behaviors regarding the frequency of peer interactions and the value of those connections.

Overall, the responses to the questions within the Social Capital section of the quantitative survey indicate that participants had strong faculty connections and engage in activity with professional associations and groups both before and after the innovation. The participants began the research study with a high-level of social capital. Participating in shared dialogue, which occurred during the PLN meetings, is familiar for them, given they already engage in frequent dialogue with faculty within their teaching discipline about teaching and learning matters. Consequently, related to Research Question 1, participation in the PLN had little immediate influence on the faculty members' attitudes and behaviors regarding their social capital.

Effective teaching practices. Four items on the quantitative survey explored participants' pedagogical practices in the developmental level classroom. Effective teaching practices for developmental level students include active learning techniques, culturally responsive teaching, and varying assessment techniques (Boylan, 2002). The final four questions of the survey asked participants to indicate their level of agreement on a four-point scale as to whether they incorporate those teaching practices in their developmental level courses. Table 6 indicates the aggregate scores for each of the four

items on the pre- and the post-survey.

Table 6

Pre- and Post-Survey Scores for Effective Teaching Practice Items

Effective Teaching Practice	Pre-Survey (N= 12)	Post-Survey (N=12)
I design my developmental courses to be highly interactive.	M = 3.75 SD = 0.45	M = 3.50 SD = 0.52
I regularly (at least once per week) have students in my developmental courses working with a partner or in a small group to complete classroom assignments.	M = 3.75 SD = 0.62	M = 3.75 SD = 0.45
I use examples in my instruction that reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of students in my developmental courses.	M = 3.33 SD = 0.49	M = 3.58 SD = 0.62
I use a variety of assessment strategies to determine if students in my developmental courses learned the material.	M = 3.58 SD = 0.67	M = 3.25 SD = 0.51

Prior to participation in the study, participants' self-perceptions of their teaching practice were high as reflected by all scores at or above 3.33. This score indicates that participants overall had agreement with each of the four statements regarding effective teaching practices in the developmental education classroom. A possible explanation for the high scores could be the participants' collective teaching experience. Seven participants have been teaching a developmental level course at a community college for more than five years, which is a long amount of time given the turnover within faculty who teach developmental level courses. Similarly, seven of the participants teach two or more developmental courses per semester. Consequently, the participants are experienced developmental instructors, which could be a possible explanation for the high-level of

agreement on the four effective teaching practices items prior to the start of the PLN meetings.

To determine the extent to which participants' perceptions regarding their teaching practice may have changed due to participation in the PLN, the statistical significance of the mean differences between the pre- and post-test scores were analyzed using a series of paired, two-tailed *t*-tests and an alpha level of 0.05. The difference in mean scores between the pre-test ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.45$) and post-test ($M = 3.50, SD = 0.52$) scores for question one (active learning) were not significant, $t(df = 11) = -1.39, p = 0.19$. For question two (collaborative learning), the difference in mean scores between the pre-test ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.62$) and post-test ($M = 3.75, SD = 0.45$) were not significant, $t(df = 11) = 0, p = 1.00$. The difference in mean scores between the pre-test ($M = 3.58, SD = 0.67$) and post-test ($M = 3.58, SD = 0.51$) for question three (culturally responsive teaching) were not significant, $t(df = 11) = 0, p = 1.00$. Finally, for the fourth question (assessment strategies), the difference in mean scores between the pre-test ($M = 3.33, SD = 0.49$) and post-test ($M = 3.25, SD = 0.62$) were not significant, $t(df = 11) = 0.431, p = 0.67$.

The data analysis indicates there was no significant difference in scores for any of the four items related to effective teaching practices from the pre-test to the post-test. The analysis does not support that participation in the PLN leads to a significant change in participants' perceptions regarding their teaching practice (Research Question 1). However, failing to find significant differences in pre- to post-scores might be attributable to the small sample size of the study, rather than an accurate reflection of

study effects. The next section of this chapter outlines the qualitative analysis, which lends support that participation in the PLN and conducting and receiving a peer observation may lead to pedagogical transformation.

Qualitative Analysis and Results

I began my analysis of the qualitative data by focusing on the interviews with the six selected participants. I chose the six participants to interview by selecting two faculty members from each discipline who in my estimation had made significant contributions during the PLN discussions. I began my analysis in this manner as the interview questions directly relate to the three Research Questions, thus enabling me to gain further insight as to whether participation in the PLN along with conducting and receiving a peer observation would lead to a potential transformation of teaching practice. The six participant interviews served as my primary source of qualitative data. After analyzing the six participant interviews, I transitioned to the analysis of the journal entries for all participants, intentionally looking for disconfirming evidence of my initial assertions based on the results from my coding.

To make sense of the interview data, I ascribed to the strategy as outlined by DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch (2011) involving the development of both data- and theory-driven codes. *Data-driven codes* emerge from the raw data whereas *theory-driven codes* are developed from an existing theory (DeCuir-Gunby, et al., 2011). The following section describes both the data-driven coding process and the theory-driven coding process.

Data-driven codes. To develop the data-driven codes, I used both *In Vivo* and *Focused Coding* strategies. To become familiar with the interview data, I read each interview transcript without making notations or memos. During my second reading of each interview, I used the *In Vivo* coding strategy of circling and underlining significant words and phrases (Saldana, 2013). I chose this strategy because I wanted to be authentic to the participants' voices. The codes are authentic to participants' words and phrases, because *In Vivo* coding "prioritizes and honors the participant's voice" (Saldana, 2013, p. 91). When key words and phrases were used often by participants and stood out in some manner, I assigned each key word or phrase a code (Saldana, 2013). This method of initial coding allowed me to better understand what aspects of the intervention were significant for participants and allowed me to establish codes that were driven directly from the participants' interviews.

My next step in the data-driven coding process was to analyze the journal responses. I focused my initial coding efforts on the journal entries of the six participants I interviewed. Then, I turned my focus to the initial coding of the remaining six participants' journal responses. Again, I followed the *In Vivo* coding strategy and circled and underlined significant words and phrases. I only reviewed and conducted initial coding for the journal prompts that directly aligned to my research questions. I found that the third journal entry had the greatest value as those particular responses aligned directly with my three Research Questions.

After I completed *In Vivo Coding* of the interviews and the journal responses, I continued with my data-driven coding process and transitioned to second cycle coding,

by following a *Focused Coding* strategy. *Focused Coding* develops the most significant codes into categories or themes (Saldana, 2013). I reviewed the initial codes and organized the codes into major themes. I created a theme from the data when I noticed multiple codes had similar words, phrases, and meaning. An example of this is for the theme *Confidence*. Words and phrases relating to confidence were common in the interview transcripts and also in the journal responses (e.g., “*It was a confidence builder*”; “*my perspective was reinforced*”). The initial *In Vivo* codes related to confidence emerged through Focused Coding as the theme of *Confidence*. Ultimately, three themes emerged from the data after I completed the *In Vivo* and *Focused Coding* strategies: *Confidence*, *Support*, and *Interdisciplinary Connections*.

My final step in the data-driven coding process was to review the six interview transcripts and all journal responses searching for disconfirming evidence of the initial three coding schemes and determine if any aspects of the data would contradict the three initial themes. I first reviewed the six interview responses, using the three initial themes as a lens looking for contradicting evidence. In each interview response, I was not able to discover disconfirming evidence that did not support the three initial themes. I then reviewed all journal responses, focusing my attention on the third and final journal response as that journal response comprehensively addressed the three research questions. Again, I did not discover disconfirming evidence for the three initial data-driven themes.

Theory-driven codes. After developing codes and ultimately themes that were derived from the data, I decided to also explore a theory-driven coding process because I

wanted to determine if the principles of one of the theoretical constructs guiding my research questions and the design of my innovation, Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory, emerged in the data. Given my Research Questions focus on whether or not participation in the PLN and conducting and receiving a peer observation would influence or transform teaching practice, I focused my theory-driven coding on Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory. DeCuir-Gunby, et al. (2011) explain the first step in developing theory-driven codes is to create codes generated from the theories that guide the study. To create the codes, I once again returned to the literature regarding transformative learning theory. As noted in Chapter 2, Mezirow (1997) states that transformation occurs when an individual critically examines a frame of reference, explores a new way of thinking or believing, and ultimately changes a behavior or belief. For transformation to occur, participants need to experience something that may not be congruent with their normal routine or expectations. In my innovation, forming an interdisciplinary professional learning network and conducting an interdisciplinary peer observation are experiences designed to create space for participants to examine a frame of reference and to take participants out of their normal routine through interdisciplinary peer observations. Once participants experience something unique, Mezirow (1997) emphasized the need for critical reflection to lead to transformation. Consequently, I created the following two codes to align with Mezirow's transformative learning theory: *impact of peer observation* and *critical reflection*.

Once I established the two theory-driven codes, I began to code the interview data by labeling sample quotes as *impact of peer observation* or *critical reflection*. For

example, one participant responded in the interview that the observation “helped me to see that there are different ways and that maybe I need to revisit some of the things that I am so stubborn about changing.” I categorized that quote with the code of *impact of peer observation*. Once I completed the theory-driven coding process for the six participant interviews, I conducted the same process for the journal responses. I once again focused first on the journal responses of the six participants I interviewed, and then I continued the theory-driven coding process with the remaining six participants’ journal responses. Again, I identified passages from the responses that reflected the *impact of peer observation* or *critical reflection*.

Next, I reviewed all the data categorized using each of the two thematic codes to determine if themes would emerge from the codes. First, I reviewed the data categorized as *impact of peer observation* to determine if any interpretive theme emerged. There were many participant responses both from the interviews and the journals that reflected participants’ positive attitudes and reactions toward peer observation. Thus, the theme I created was the *positive impact of peer observation*. For example, a math faculty participant stated that, “It was just kind of encouraging to see a really good teacher with a really good activity going through the same stuff and just working the room.” This is one example of data that reflects the theme of the *positive impact of peer observation*.

Finally, I reviewed the data that was categorized as *critical reflection* to determine if any common theme emerged. Again, many participants’ responses from interviews and the journal prompts indicated the benefits of critical reflection. However, a common theme emerged that there were positive benefits to *shared critical reflection*, that is the

benefits of participating in shared critical dialogue. Consequently, I established the theme of *benefits of shared critical reflection* to reflect participants' responses to the virtues of critical reflection. For example, one of the reading faculty participants wrote in a journal response that "Working with my observation partner allowed me to see the vast benefit of exchanging ideas with colleagues." This is an example of the positive value of shared critical reflection.

To remain consistent with the data-driven coding process and to gain greater confidence in the developed themes, I completed one final step in the theory-driven coding process to seek disconfirming evidence of the two themes. First, I reviewed the six interview transcripts. During this review, I did discover evidence that did not fully support the positive impact of the interdisciplinary peer observation and the shared critical dialogue. For example, when responding to the journal prompt whether participation in the PLN and conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation would lead to transformational change, one participant responded, "No, but it has allowed me to become acquainted with other faculty I might not have had the opportunity to engage with and support future professional experiences." This journal response does not fully support the theme of the positive impact of interdisciplinary peer observation as the participant indicated that the experience would not lead to pedagogical transformation. However, this response did lend credence that the experience in the PLN strengthened social capital. Another participant responded to the same journal prompt by writing, "No, I think my perspective was reinforced." Again, this response does not support that participation in the PLN will lead to transformation. This response, though,

did align with the theme of *confidence* that emerged during the data-driven coding process. Ultimately, after conducting both data-driven and theory-driven coding processes, five themes emerged from the data: *Confidence, Support, Interdisciplinary Connections, Positive Impact of Peer Observation, and Benefits of Shared Critical Reflection.*

Assertions

Once I established these five themes, I reviewed the codes categorized to each theme. As I reviewed the codes, I developed assertions that directly align with one or more of the Research Questions. For example, the assertion that *participants' confidence with their teaching pedagogy in the developmental level classroom increased through shared dialogue and interdisciplinary peer observation* directly aligns to Research Question 1. Table 7 outlines the themes and assertions that emerged after both data-driven coding and theory-driven coding.

Table 7

Themes and Assertions Based on Qualitative Data

Themes	Assertions	Alignment with Research Question
Confidence	Participants' confidence in their teaching practice increased through shared dialogue and interdisciplinary peer observation.	Research Question 1
Support	The PLN functioned as an informal peer support network.	Research Question 1
Interdisciplinary Connections	The interdisciplinary connections increased participants' social capital exposing them to new ideas and teaching strategies which influences pedagogical transformation.	Research Questions 1, 2, and 3
Benefits of Shared Critical Reflection	Participants' engaging in critical reflection of their teaching practice is essential to transformation.	Research Question 2
Positive Impact of Peer Observation	Participants' teaching behaviors are more likely to be transformed by observing a peer as opposed to being observed by a peer.	Research Question 3

Confidence. *Assertion 1 - Participants' confidence increased through shared dialogue and interdisciplinary peer observation.* This assertion is warranted through the data provided by multiple participants in the interviews as well as journal responses. Participation in the PLN and engaging in shared dialogue about teaching and learning practices increased participants' confidence in their own teaching practices, as participant's individual teaching strategies and practices may have been affirmed by their

colleagues. For example, one math faculty participant explained in the interview that,

“Sitting and listening to other people and what they’re doing in their class, to actually see [peer observation partner] and what [peer observation partner] is doing in the class, seeing that kind of experimental lab going on, that’s where the confidence came in, that I’m not on my own.”

The same participant continued to explain in the interview that, “Just hearing my other colleagues with the same stories, the same strategies and what they’re all trying to do. It was kind of nice to hear all that. Confidence for the instructors definitely came out in our dialogue.” Confidence emerged as a theme during the participant interviews.

By reviewing the data provided in the journal responses, I was able to confirm the assertion that participants’ confidence increased due to participation in the PLN and by conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation. One English faculty member responded to a prompt from the third journal reflection by writing,

“It was nice to see that some of the strategies I use in my class are ones that another instructor thought was a good idea and will try in his class. That gives a little boost of confidence to me.”

A math faculty participant wrote in a journal response that, “It was comforting and challenging to learn that both English and math experience the same sorts of successes and challenges in the classroom.” Finally, a math faculty member replied in his journal that, “I gained confidence in what I do in my classroom due to this visit.” Participation in the PLN and also conducting and receiving a peer observation led to increased confidence for participants’ regarding their teaching practice. Because participants were able to observe similar teaching strategies conducted by peers and because participants heard others talk of similar pedagogical practices in the developmental classroom,

participants' affirmed their own teaching practices and ultimately, their confidence in their teaching practice in the developmental education classroom increased.

Support. *Assertion 2 - The PLN functioned as an informal peer support network.*

Qualitative data supports that the formation of the PLN created an informal peer support network for participants. This assertion is justified based on comments from the interviews as well as written responses to the journal prompts. For example, one math faculty participant commented that, "It was refreshing to see that faculty in other disciplines are doing some of the same things we are trying in math to get their students to succeed." A different math faculty participant commented in the interview that, "Sometimes often I feel like I'm just alone but having been in another class and listening to everybody's stories, I was like 'Wow, this is across the board; it's not just math.'" This feeling of aloneness or isolation alluded to by the participant that is inherent in the teaching profession is reflected in attitudes in higher education faculty (Carpenter, Coughlin, Morgan, & Price, 2010). However, as the participant indicated, participation in this PLN fostered a sense of support and new connections that may not have otherwise existed. The same participant commented that, "It was encouraging to kind of hear the same struggles." The same participant also commented in the second journal response that, "It is comforting to know that I am not alone in thinking about what I am doing in the classroom." The participant's attitudes shifted from that of being alone to feeling encouraged and comforted.

Additional comments and written responses referenced this sense of participants experiencing the "same struggles." For example, to further emphasize the peer support

that was developed, one English faculty member commented on the positive collegiality that formed and was excited to be “able to hear what other disciplines were saying and pointing out that it was similar to my own experiences and then just realizing that these are things we struggle with.” Once again, a participant referenced the “struggle” of teaching a developmental level course. Participants became more willing to reference challenges they experience in the developmental level classroom because they formed a support network with peers who are experiencing the same challenges. As one of the English faculty participants commented about the PLN, “You realize how much you have in common as far as things that come up in class, you feel like and realize that it’s not just something that’s happening to me.” Again, participation in the PLN created a realization for participants that what is occurring in the developmental classroom is not just happening to one individual; others share in those same experiences. When participants realized colleagues in the PLN shared this same struggle, they developed a greater sense of support for each other. Consequently, as one English faculty member commented, “I feel like there are more resources now. If I can view my colleagues as resources and then maybe then also they would think of me as a resource.” The interviews and journal responses justify the assertion that participation in the PLN created a sense of connection and support to other faculty, which increased participants’ social capital.

Interdisciplinary connections. *Assertion 3 - The interdisciplinary connections increased participants’ social capital exposing them to new ideas and teaching strategies which influences pedagogical transformation.* Qualitative data also supports that the interdisciplinary connections increased participants’ social capital and led them to

consider pedagogical transformation of their teaching practice. In the final journal response, one math faculty member commented about the interdisciplinary nature of the project,

“What was different and really tweaked my interest was the fact that there would be other reading, English and other math colleagues. Just getting together with them and seeing where they’re at, what they’re understandings are, what they’re trying to do, their strategies - what’s working, what’s not working. I was really looking forward to that and I wasn’t disappointed.”

Another English faculty participant commented in a journal response that, “I really liked hearing from people in the other disciplines, especially Math because we don’t often interact with the Math teachers.” Data from the interviews and journal responses support that faculty often do not interact with others outside their respective teaching disciplines. Consequently, participants valued this opportunity for interdisciplinary connections.

The notion that participants often do not interact with others outside their teaching discipline was further highlighted by an English faculty member during the interview who said, “Most of the time in professional development, or not most of the time but a lot of the time, I’m with English people. When I go to conferences, it’s an English conference and it’s all English people.” After the second journal prompt, one English faculty member responded, “I also value this time because so often teachers have very little time or venue space to process through strategies with other professionals.” To further illustrate the point that participants valued the interdisciplinary connections, one reading faculty member commented, “I have so much to learn, not just about my own department and the people within it, but also looking across departments.” Again, participants emphasized the value of interacting with faculty from different disciplines

and departments. Finally, after the third journal prompt, a math faculty participant commented about participation in the PLN, “Makes me feel that I am not alone and also allows me to see what is happening in the other disciplines.” Participants commented on this feeling of aloneness and isolation; however, participation in the PLN exposed participants to new individuals and increased their social capital.

Participants not only valued the newly formed interdisciplinary connections, they also learned new teaching strategies from those connections. For example, a reading faculty participant who observed an English faculty member noted a new teaching strategy from the interdisciplinary peer observation. The faculty member commented, “I think the piece that that would go into my toolbox for use next semester would be the personal grammar wall within the context of multi-sensory grammar to make it more useful to the students.” This is an example of one participant seeing a new teaching strategy or technique from a colleague in a different discipline. A different reading faculty member who also observed an English faculty participant noted,

“They helped me to see that there are different ways and that maybe I need to revisit some of the things that I am so stubborn about changing. So I guess in general what I want to say is that observing [participant name] helped me reflect on my own practice and how I need to, to look again on how I need to do things and that maybe I’m not always as effective as I think I am.”

The responses of these two participants indicate that interdisciplinary connections and dialogue could lead to pedagogical transformation with the inclusion of new teaching strategies. The next two assertions also support the findings that participation in the PLN along with conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation can lead to pedagogical transformation.

Benefits of shared critical reflection. *Assertion 4 - Participants engaging in shared critical reflection of their teaching practice is essential to transformation.*

Assertions 4 and 5 emerged through a theory-driven coding process. The focus for Assertion 4 is the potential transformation of teaching practice as a result of shared critical reflection. Data indicate that engaging in critical shared reflection is an essential component to transformation. One characteristic that emerged regarding shared critical dialogue is the importance of trust. For example, one reading faculty participant commented on the importance of trust when engaging in shared critical dialogue:

“I think as much as I like talking with my colleagues, I don’t know how many times we have the opportunity to be open and honest and feel that sense of trust. That was just something that went on between us and didn’t need to go any further. It was just for us to talk and be comfortable about it.”

Trust also emerged in participants’ journal responses as well. One English faculty participant noted, “I really enjoy being observed when it is someone that I trust to help me realize my full teaching potential.” A math faculty participant noted in the third journal response the participation in the PLN “provides a safe opportunity to reflect on my/our practice.” In this instance, the use of the word *safe* implies a level of trust with the other participants and myself as the meeting facilitator. The participants in the PLN felt a sense of trust with each other as reflected in their responses. Consequently, the shared critical dialogue became more meaningful and productive.

Because trust had developed between the participants and me, the shared critical dialogue was authentic and eventually led to discussion of potential pedagogical transformation. Participants highly valued the collective dialogue. For example, a math

faculty participant stated in the interview:

“I thought the dialogue was the most important. You see what went well, why didn’t it go well, what would you have done different. Just kind of verbally saying that stuff to somebody who’s been in your room and you’ve been in their room and just kind of talking shop, it was kind of nice.”

One English faculty participant also commented on the value of the shared critical dialogue explaining, “What I did enjoy about it would be just getting together with my peers and talking about our teaching and our practice...and it was also fun to hear from people in other departments and talking about practice.” Similarly, a different English faculty participant noted, “It’s great to have that time with them to discuss these [practices] because a lot of times we’re working on our own stuff, we are interacting mostly with students and we don’t have enough time to exchange ideas.” The PLN created the time, the space, and the trust for participants to engage in shared critical dialogue. Although the shared dialogue was very important to this research project, the qualitative data indicate that what may lead to pedagogical transformation was participants conducting a peer observation.

Positive impact of peer observation. *Assertion 5 - Participants’ teaching behaviors are more likely to be transformed by observing a peer as opposed to being observed by a peer.* Mezirow (1997) states that for transformation to occur, participants need to experience a new way of thinking. For this study, the interdisciplinary peer observations served as the catalyst to challenge faculty members to explore a new way of thinking. To illustrate this point, one English faculty member noted in the interview that, “I kind of felt like a foreigner in the math class a little bit.” Other participants noted the difference they felt by observing a colleague from a different discipline teach a

developmental level course. Consequently, this feeling of difference pushed faculty out of their comfort zone and afforded them the opportunity to learn from others focusing more on teaching pedagogy as opposed to teaching content. One math faculty participant noted in the interview that observing a reading faculty participant was, “very different than math class...It was very more student driven than mine was.” The math faculty participant further elaborated on the comment that the class was more student driven. The faculty participant explained that her colleague:

“Sort of took a back seat...but she just wasn’t up at the front of the room lecturing, which at least with me that can be sort of a common thing, that’s sort of how I start off. I guess that’s sort of more that student driven. And then at the end they were working on individual stuff. And so she would talk to them a little bit about their success portfolios, incoming weeks, you know what’s going to happen. Definitely more student driven than what my math class usually is.”

This response highlights the value of the interdisciplinary peer observations, and specifically the value of observing an instructor from another discipline.

Additional data support that conducting an interdisciplinary peer observation can lead to pedagogical transformation. Below is a list of the various pedagogical transformations that participants noted either in the interviews or journal responses. In each instance, the faculty participant came to express a desire to infuse a new teaching strategy or to transform a current aspect of their teaching because of conducting an interdisciplinary peer observation. Table 8 lists the potential pedagogical transformations that participants indicated in interviews and journal responses organized by teaching discipline.

Table 8

Potential Pedagogical Transformations by Teaching Discipline

Discipline	Pedagogical Transformation
English	Include a real-time activity (i.e., editing in real time on a sample document) during instruction
	Seek more student voice in the classroom
	Implement a variety of formative assessment strategies
	More tactile and interactive lessons to teach grammar
Math	Focus on community building early in the semester
	Do not allow students to sit in the back of the room when space available in the front
	Implement a Jeopardy game for mid-term or final exam review
	Modify note-taking expectations so students are more active than passive
Reading	Incorporate strategies to prepare students in development courses to work collaboratively to solve math problems
Reading	Modify syllabus and develop more of a “gentle spirit” in the classroom

The data from the interviews and journal responses indicate that faculty participants, in general, may transform an element of their teaching practice. This transformation could be as simple as infusing a new strategy or technique or more complex to creating a more student-centered classroom environment.

By observing a peer from a different discipline teach, faculty members were able to focus more of their attention on teaching strategies as opposed to discipline content. Multiple participants commented on this either in the interview or in journal responses.

For example, one English faculty member noted in a journal response that, “When you observe, you have the benefit of being able to see whole class engagement, which you sometimes miss when you monitoring your own class for growth.” Furthermore, another English faculty participant noted in a journal response that conducting a peer observation “Helps to give me ideas that I want to try in my own classes. I also like getting out of the ‘English bubble’ and talking to people in other content [areas].”

The qualitative data support the five assertions regarding the formation of an interdisciplinary PLN and the value of conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation. Participants’ confidence in their teaching practice increased, and participants developed an informal support network that grew from a sense of trust and common purpose. Participants’ social capital was enhanced as they met and interacted with instructors from a different discipline that expanded their ideas about effective teaching practices. Ultimately, participation in the PLN and conducting and receiving a peer observation led some participants to consider a transformation of individual teaching practices and in a few cases, a modification to a teaching philosophy.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The closing chapter provides an overview and summary of my research, a discussion of the implications to my current context and practice, future research ideas, and my personal reflections as a researcher.

Overview and Summary

The goal of my action research project was to increase faculty participants' social capital to transform developmental education teaching practices through faculty members' participation in a professional learning network and the completion of interdisciplinary peer observations. Faculty actively participated in three professional learning network meetings, engaging in shared critical dialogue regarding effective developmental education teaching practices. In addition, participants conducted and received an interdisciplinary peer observation from a colleague within the PLN.

I designed the study around the following three research questions:

1. How and to what extent does participation in an interdisciplinary professional learning network influence developmental education faculty members' perceptions regarding their teaching practice?
2. How does engaging in critical reflection about teaching with faculty from a different discipline influence developmental education faculty members' self-perceptions of their teaching practice?
3. How does conducting and receiving peer observations from a faculty member from a different discipline transform a developmental instructor's teaching practice?

Quantitative data indicated that participation in an interdisciplinary PLN did not significantly influence developmental education faculty members' perceptions regarding their teaching practice (Research Question 1). The participants in my action research project scored themselves highly on the pre-survey on both the social capital items as well as the effective teaching practice items. Given participants had a high level of teaching experience along with strong social capital, participants' perceptions regarding their teaching practice from the pre- and the post-test responses remained relatively unchanged.

Qualitative data, on the other hand, did indicate that participants would consider various changes and transformations to their teaching strategies based on participation in the PLN and from conducting and receiving a peer observation. Although the changes that participants discussed did not generally indicate a transformation of beliefs and attitudes, participant responses did lend themselves to potential pedagogical transformation. The pedagogical transformations included modifications to an instructor's syllabus, modifications to an existing lesson, implementation of new teaching strategies and ideas, and even a philosophical shift toward more of a student-centered learning environment. The qualitative data did indicate that participation in an interdisciplinary professional learning network influenced developmental education faculty members' perceptions regarding their teaching practice, as the participants indicated potential changes to their practice due to the shared critical dialogue that occurred within the PLN discussions (Research Question 2). Furthermore, the qualitative data did indicate that conducting and receiving a peer observation from a faculty member

from a different discipline may lead to transformation of a developmental instructor's teaching practice (Research Question 3).

The qualitative data also revealed that participants' confidence in their teaching practice increased from participation in the PLN and conducting and receiving a peer observation. This growth in confidence was largely due to participants hearing others express similar concerns regarding the challenges faced in the developmental classroom, or the growth in confidence can be attributed to a sense of affirmation from watching another faculty member teach and utilize similar teaching strategies. In addition to the growth in confidence, faculty members felt a sense of support from their peers and trusted they can share openly and honestly about their teaching practices. Faculty participants were willing to be vulnerable within this PLN due to the level of trust that had been developed.

Faculty participants also valued the interdisciplinary nature of the research study, as many faculty noted in the interviews and in journal responses that participation in the PLN connected them with colleagues they rarely have the opportunity to engage in dialogue about teaching and learning matters. The interdisciplinary nature of the study also proved to create a rich environment for shared critical dialogue. Quantitative data indicated that faculty teaching in different disciplines often do not have an opportunity to interact with each other to engage in meaningful dialogue, observation, and reflection regarding teaching practice. The varying perspectives and philosophies from the three teaching disciplines exposed participants to different teaching methodologies. The

diversity of disciplines represented, along with the variance in years of teaching experience, enhanced the interdisciplinary aspect of this innovation.

Finally, qualitative data revealed that participants valued observing a colleague in his or her teaching environment. The pre-survey quantitative data indicated that participants infrequently observed a colleague from a different discipline teach. Consequently, the experience of conducting an interdisciplinary peer observation was new for most participants and led to a meaningful experience that influenced participants' teaching practice.

Limitations

The following section outlines the limitations of the study. First, the results of the study are applicable to my local context, Glendale Community College. Leaders who attempt to implement a similar PLN or interdisciplinary peer observation experience should not expect to have the same results, as the local college context, the makeup of the faculty participants, and the PLN facilitator would influence outcomes.

Another limitation to the study is that my role as researcher, as well as my role as Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs, may have influenced participant responses. I have worked with and am considered an evaluator/supervisor to the participants due to the nature of my position at the college. Participants may have felt compelled to provide favorable responses to their experiences in journal responses and interviews. Furthermore, I have worked with many of the participants during my four years at the college on various projects and initiatives. Consequently, I had already developed positive working relationships with participants and to some degree, had developed a

level of trust. This too may have caused participants to be supportive and positive in responses to their experiences. Furthermore, trust may have developed quicker within the PLN given the familiarity that already existed between the participants and me.

The study is also limited because I only successfully recruited full-time residential faculty participants. In general, full-time faculty are more aware of college initiatives and programs. Furthermore, full-time faculty have established professional relationships on the campus, or in other words, most likely have stronger social capital. Furthermore, because participants were full-time faculty and were very engaged in professional development activities, participants indicated their frequent use of effective teaching practices both in the pre- and post-survey responses. Given participants had strong social capital and in general, were demonstrating the use of effective teaching practices in the classroom, these factors may have limited the influence participation in the PLN had on their pedagogical beliefs and practices.

Another limitation to the study is the relatively short amount of time for the formation of the PLN and to conduct/receive a peer observation. The study itself lasted just three months and included roughly ten to twelve hours of faculty participation. For transformation to occur beyond just pedagogy, participants may need to be part of a longer professional development experience to further develop relationships, to establish greater trust, and to allow time to experiment with new pedagogy.

Finally, participation in the PLN developed confidence for many participants and affirmed their teaching practices. As many noted in interview and journal responses, seeing other faculty participants experience similar challenges or use similar teaching

techniques was reassuring. For example, one participant noted in the interview that, “It was encouraging to kind of hear the same struggles.” A second participant responded in the third journal prompt that, “it was nice to see that some of the issues I have in my class are issues in other developmental classes as well.” Finally, one participant noted in the final journal entry that participation in the PLN “more reaffirmed my perspective about practices.” This reassurance and sense of encouragement, however, could be problematic. Mandzuk et. al., (2005) learned that participation in co-hort experiences such as this study could stifle participants’ creative thinking. Similarly, participation in the PLN could have stifled some participants’ desire to transform teaching practice. This feeling of encouragement and affirmation may lead some faculty to keep their current teaching practices as opposed to transform them. By seeing other faculty experiencing the same challenges, faculty participants may then question the need for change. In the case of this study, the majority of participants did express a desire to transform teaching practice. However, participation in the PLN could actually inhibit new and creative thinking because if peers within the study reinforce participants’ teaching practices, participants could question or even resist the need to change or transform their teaching practice.

Lessons Learned

Through completion of this study, I learned many lessons, both personally and professionally, regarding social capital, the field of developmental education, and community college faculty. First, in order for faculty to learn from and grow with each other, trust must be established between participants. The concept of trust emerged in the literature review, and also emerged from participant responses. In order for faculty to

engage in shared, critical dialogue, and in order for faculty to open their classroom doors to peers for the purposes of observation, trust must be established. However, establishing trust is not easy. Trust was attained in our PLN primarily due to previous shared experiences (i.e., individuals in the PLN had worked together before) and through established trust with me as the facilitator. I learned that trust cannot be taken for granted to naturally exist between instructors. Trust will need to be earned and developed. I was fortunate that we were able to establish a level of trust relatively quickly with the twelve participants. However, if this study were to be replicated again with different participants, I would advise facilitators to include intentional trust-building activities early and often in the experience. If trust does not exist between participants, I do not believe the critical dialogue and peer observation experience will be authentic and meaningful.

A second lesson learned from this study is that as an academic leader, I need to develop and support more intentional strategies to engage adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty teach the majority of developmental level courses. Furthermore, adjunct faculty teach approximately 50% of all courses offered at GCC. Consequently, academic leaders must develop intentional and purposeful strategies to better engage adjunct faculty in professional development and student success initiatives. First, academic leaders need to intentionally create time and space for adjunct faculty to engage in shared critical reflection and dialogue about teaching and learning practices. Shared dialogue can be fostered through designed experiences, such as GCC's annual Great Ideas For Teaching (GIFT) exchange program. The GIFT Exchange event provides opportunity for faculty to share effective teaching practices in brief presentations to other faculty in attendance.

This program can be promoted more intentionally with adjunct faculty to create opportunity for shared dialogue and relationship building, increasing adjunct faculty members' social capital. Second, academic leaders need to develop strategies to attract adjunct faculty to participate in more professional development programs. One way to do so is to offer incentives for participation, such as additional compensation, a stipend, for attendance and participation in the activity. Or, incentives could be benefits for adjunct faculty who participate in college-sponsored professional development programs, such as allowing adjunct faculty advanced scheduling of classes. Attracting adjunct faculty to participate in professional development experiences is critical to student success. Consequently, adjunct faculty must be afforded time and space to engage in shared critical dialogue where incentives are offered to provide that level of external motivation and to show their time is valued.

Finally, I learned faculty developers and administrators would benefit from designing and implementing professional development experiences that are a series of events involving a cohort as opposed to episodic, one-time workshops. The culture of professional development in higher education is often to offer stand-alone workshops, which may assist faculty to meet an immediate need regarding a specific technology or teaching strategy (Eisen, 2001). However, results of this study indicate that faculty benefit from sustained workshops that include a frequency of interaction and meetings. One of the strengths of my innovation is faculty had opportunities to interact with the same group of individuals over a period of time to engage in meaningful, critical dialogue. More professional development experiences at GCC should be designed with

the intent to keep the same participants together for a period of time to focus on a specific topic or theme regarding teaching and learning.

Personally, I learned how much I enjoy facilitating professional development experiences for faculty. I began my career in public education as a middle school English teacher. Being in front of a class of students, regardless of age, always energized me and charged my professional spirit. I began my career with the Maricopa County Community College District as an instructional designer in a center dedicated to teaching and learning. In this role, I routinely designed and facilitated professional development experiences for faculty. However, in my current role at GCC, I do not have as many opportunities to facilitate learning experiences like this. Having this opportunity to facilitate three learning sessions with twelve highly motivated and engaged professionals was extremely rewarding and fulfilling. I found myself leaving each PLN session recharged and rejuvenated about the teaching profession and the mission of the community college.

Implications for Practice

When a faculty member is hired as a permanent, residential faculty member at any of the Maricopa Community Colleges, he or she is considered probationary status. All probationary faculty participate in the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) process to determine if after five years, a faculty member will be granted appointive status, the Maricopa Community Colleges' equivalent of university tenure. As part of the PAR process, new faculty members are assigned mentors whose role is to assist the faculty member throughout the academic year in both understanding what it means to serve as a

residential faculty member as well as to provide guidance and support regarding classroom teaching. Additionally, each new faculty member is required to have the mentors conduct a classroom observation.

After completion of this study, I will recommend to our faculty leadership and college president that Glendale Community College consider revising the PAR process to allow an option for new faculty to either have the mentor observe the new faculty member or allow the new faculty member to observe the mentor. Data from this study indicate that faculty participants valued conducting a peer observation. Allowing new faculty the opportunity to observe a peer mentor would strengthen the current PAR process and make the program even more meaningful for faculty. Furthermore, faculty mentors may also benefit from receiving feedback from a peer. I would even support a recommendation to require new faculty to observe a peer teach both within and outside of one's teaching discipline during their initial years at the college, to allow new faculty an opportunity to see and experience varying classroom strategies. This exposure to other teaching practices, particularly from different disciplines, could result in pedagogical transformation more than having other faculty and administrators observe the new faculty member teach.

Beyond proposing a local implementation of peer observation within the PAR process at GCC, I plan to discuss the value of interdisciplinary peer observation with faculty leaders and administrators across the Maricopa Community College system. Ultimately, I do believe peer observation should be required for Maricopa's faculty. Since each of the colleges within the Maricopa system has a Center for Teaching and

Learning, these Centers could serve as champions for fostering and coordinating interdisciplinary peer observation programs. In collaboration with faculty and district leadership, my goal will be to draft language to be included within faculty policy manuals to infuse interdisciplinary peer observation in professional development programs. By doing so, the Maricopa Community Colleges will have more meaningful and transformative faculty development programs.

Additionally, I was very interested in the collegiality that developed quickly between faculty across disciplines. Faculty participants expressed genuine joy in both interview and journal responses regarding interacting with faculty members from a different discipline. This relation over shared dialogue between disciplines causes me to consider if GCC should reconsider the office assignments for faculty. Presently, faculty members primarily have offices in clusters by department. Some buildings are dedicated exclusively to one department or discipline. The math department, as one example, has its own building which houses most all math faculty as well as math instructional classrooms. Other buildings, however, may have multiple disciplines; however, each building tends to have a dominant discipline. I would be interested in discussing with faculty and college leadership the idea of creating additional interdisciplinary buildings where faculty from multiple disciplines are located. This type of intentional design could increase opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue and new interdisciplinary connections and may naturally increase a faculty member's social capital.

Implications for Future Research

First and foremost, future research is needed to determine the impact of this innovation for adjunct faculty. As noted earlier, one of the limitations of this study was that I did not have adjunct faculty participants. Conducting this study with adjunct faculty is critical as the design of the innovation may need to be altered to meet the needs of adjunct faculty. For example, I believe additional trust building activities may need to be included. Trust is an integral factor in creating an open and meaningful professional learning network. Given adjunct faculty most likely have fewer connections with colleagues within the organization and they tend to have fewer interdisciplinary relationships, replicating this study with adjunct faculty may prove to be even more transformative.

A second future study could explore the role of instructor confidence in student success. As discussed in Chapter 4, instructor confidence emerged as a theme. The formation of the PLN along with conducting and receiving a peer observation enhanced instructor confidence. I believe further dialogue and research around instructor confidence in the developmental level classroom, along with the impact of instructor confidence on student success, would be warranted. My study was not designed to explore instructor confidence before, during, and after this professional development experience. However, a future study could explore how and to what extent instructors' confidence changes through shared dialogue and observation with peers from both within and outside the teaching discipline. Furthermore, research could be conducted to better understand what factors contribute to instructor confidence. For example, what role do

students play in shaping instructor confidence? How do peers influence instructor confidence? How do administrators influence instructor confidence? A more in-depth analysis of instructor confidence could have significant implications for faculty development programming for community colleges.

Another future study could be a longitudinal study following these twelve faculty participants. I could follow the twelve participants to explore if the new interdisciplinary connections formed because of this study lasted beyond the fall 2016 semester. I could interview participants to determine if the intervention had a long-term influence, and if participants followed through on the pedagogical transformations mentioned in the interviews and journal responses. Finally, I would be interested to learn if participants sought to conduct or receive an interdisciplinary peer observation independent of being involved in a formal program. I am curious if participation in the study would cause a faculty member to organize a peer observation without any external motivation to do so.

Finally, another future research study could expand interdisciplinary peer observations beyond developmental level courses and the disciplines of English, reading and math. I am interested to learn the value in creating other interdisciplinary connections such as linking science and art faculty or career and technical education faculty with humanities faculty. Even though my study involved participants from three different disciplines, my participants all had something in common – they were teaching students who had placed into developmental level courses. In other words, my participants were joined by a common goal – to improve the success of students who place into developmental level courses. I am curious of the importance of sharing a common goal

regarding the formation of the PLN. If the PLN involves other disciplinary combinations (nursing and history for example), I would be interested to learn if the level of shared critical dialogue would be as rich and meaningful, given the instructors may teach courses with very different student populations.

Personal Reflection and Closing Thoughts

When I began this doctoral journey, I decided to blend two of my passions: faculty development and the field of developmental education. Throughout my career in public education, I have been afforded opportunities to participate in, as well as lead, professional development experiences. I have been both a participant and facilitator of workshops, trainings, and conferences. For this study, I was able to both design and deliver this professional development innovation. After completion of this study, I firmly believe that the most effective design of professional development experiences is to create as much time and space as possible for instructors to engage in structured dialogue. When faculty come together to engage in meaningful dialogue about their teaching practice, learning and transformation will occur. Too many times I have designed and participated in professional development experiences that do not create time and place for faculty to engage in dialogue with each other. I felt privileged to be part of such rich conversations between faculty members whose sole purpose was to both grow as an instructor and to help their colleagues grow as well.

My work during this research project also served to remind me as to why faculty, staff, and administrators do the work that we do day in and day out – to support students in achieving their academic and personal goals. In my current role as Interim Vice

President of Academic Affairs, many problems and concerns come forward to my office that often times do not necessarily involve students. However, engaging with these twelve faculty participants in this manner was purely about students and their success. I was rejuvenated and energized after each PLN meeting. I was heartened to read the journal responses and inspired after conducting the six participant interviews. The day-to-day role as an administrator can often take me away from the classroom and unfortunately, away from direct support of students. Completion of this project reinforced for me the mission of Glendale Community College – to foster student success.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Developing Social Capital in Community College Developmental Education Faculty

Letter of Participation

Dear Glendale Community College Faculty Member:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Michelle Jordan in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. Additionally, I work as an administrator at Glendale Community College (GCC). I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral studies to explore if a faculty member's participation in an interdisciplinary professional learning network, which will include participants conducting and receiving a peer observation, will transform teaching practice to better support student learning in the classroom.

Given you are scheduled to teach a developmental education course for GCC in the fall 2016 semester, I am inviting you to be a participant in this study. Should you agree to participate in the study, you are committing to 12 – 18 hours of time to participate in the following experiences:

- Active participation in a professional learning network that will include attendance at three meetings and completion of various open-ended journal responses during each meeting;
- Completion of a pre- and post-survey to measure perceptions of your teaching practice and your current professional network;
- Conducting and receiving a peer observation, which includes a pre- and post-observation meeting with your peer instructor;
- And, a few participants will participate in an interview to discuss the overall experience and potential impact on your teaching practice.

The research study will occur during the duration of the fall 2016 semester, with peer observations occurring in November 2016.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; no compensation will be provided. Participation in the study is also contingent on the developmental course you are scheduled to teach having sufficient student enrollment. Furthermore, participation in the study does not impact your status or employment with GCC in any manner whether full-time or part-time faculty. Finally, you can withdraw from the study at any time for any reason and without consequence.

The possible benefit of participation in this study is an opportunity for you to transform your teaching practice in the developmental classroom through dialogue, observation, and reflection of other community college faculty in different disciplines. Participants may also consider that aspects of this study may be applicable to a faculty member's Individual Development Plan (IDP), Faculty Evaluation Plan (FEP), or other related professional development programs at GCC. The study presents a minimal level of risk that is believed to be no greater than the risks experienced in every day life.

Responses to any data collection tools you complete will be confidential and will only be shared and reviewed by me. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications; however, your name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your participation in this study, please call me at (623) 845-3692, Dr. Michelle Jordan at (480) 965-9663, or GCC IRB representative, Dr. Phil Arcuria (623) 845-4487.

Sincerely,

Eric Leshinskie

By signing below, you are giving consent to your participation in the above study.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

If you have any questions about your school or your student's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel your school or your students have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788 or Glendale Community College's IRB representative, Dr. Phil Arcuria, at (623) 845-4487.

APPENDIX B

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION FACULTY SURVEY

Introduction

My name is Eric Leshinskie, and I am a doctoral student at Arizona State University in the Leadership and Innovation program through the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's college. The goal of this brief survey is to learn more about the professional connections and teaching practices of developmental education faculty. I will be using these responses for my research study in which you have agreed to participate. You have been selected because you are currently teaching a developmental course at Glendale Community College this semester. By responding to the survey, you are giving consent to continue participating in the study. Please remember that this survey is voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous. The survey will take no more than ten-minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time to complete the questions.

To complete the survey, please visit the following link:

(Survey link will be provided to SurveyMonkey)

Part I: Background Information

1. What is your current role at Glendale Community College?
 - Residential faculty (RFP)
 - Adjunct faculty

2. In which discipline do you teach a developmental course?
 - Math
 - Reading
 - English

3. How many developmental courses, on average, do you teach in a given semester?
 - One
 - Two
 - Three or more

4. How long have you been teaching developmental courses at a community college?
 - Less than one year
 - One to five years
 - Six or more years

Part II: Professional Groups and Networks

The following items relate to your professional groups and networks outside of the Maricopa Community College system. Please respond to each item as best as you can.

- 5. I am a member of a professional association focused on my teaching discipline or field.
 - Yes
 - No

- 6. I am a member of a professional association or network focused on the field of developmental education (i.e., National Association of Developmental Education, the Arizona Association of Developmental Education).
 - Yes
 - No

- 7. I regularly attend national or regional conferences or workshops related to my teaching discipline or field.
 - Yes
 - No

- 8. I regularly attend national or regional conferences or workshops exclusively focused on developmental education teaching practices.
 - Yes
 - No

Part III: Faculty Connections

The following questions will help me to learn more about your connections and professional relationships at GCC.

- 9. I collaborate with developmental education faculty **within** my discipline on teaching and learning matters.
 - Yes
 - No

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10. I value collaborating with developmental education faculty within my discipline on teaching and learning matters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. I collaborate with developmental education faculty **outside** my discipline on teaching and learning matters.

- Yes
- No

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12. I value collaborating with developmental education faculty outside my discipline on teaching and learning matters.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. I have a colleague in my department that I consider a mentor or a coach.

- Yes
- No

14. I have a colleague in a **different** department that I consider a mentor or a coach.

- Yes
- No

15. I regularly (once per academic year) observe a colleague in my discipline teach a developmental course.

- Yes
- No

16. I regularly (once per academic year) observe a colleague **outside** my discipline teach a developmental course.

- Yes
- No

17. I frequently interact with other colleagues in my department.

- Yes
- No

18. I frequently interact with colleagues **outside** my department.

- Yes
- No

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19. Developing positive professional relationships with faculty colleagues at GCC is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. I would like to have more opportunity to engage in teaching and learning conversations with faculty colleagues at GCC.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. I would like to have more opportunity to observe colleagues teach a developmental education course at GCC.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Part IV: Teaching Practice

The following questions will help me to understand your teaching practice.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
22. I design my developmental courses to be highly interactive for students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. I regularly (at least once per week) have students in my developmental courses working with a partner or in small groups to complete classroom assignments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. I use a variety of assessment strategies to determine if students in my developmental courses learned the material.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. I use examples in my instruction that reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of students in my developmental courses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. If you have any questions regarding the survey or its purpose, please do not hesitate to contact me via email (eric.leshinskie@gccaz.edu) or phone (623-845-3692).

APPENDIX C

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION FACULTY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Good (morning/afternoon). My name is Eric Leshinskie, and I am a doctoral student at Arizona State University in the Leadership and Innovation program through the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's college. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this brief interview to help me learn more about your experiences participating in the professional learning network and also in conducting and receiving a peer observation. I have a series of questions prepared for you today, and I will be taking notes as we talk. I anticipate asking some follow-up questions as well throughout the conversation. Please know I will be using your responses as part of my formal research study. By conducting this interview, you are giving consent to continue participating in the study. This interview is voluntary, and if at any time you want or need to stop the interview, please do so. Finally, I would like to record this interview. If you would like me to stop recording at any time, just let me know. May I have your verbal consent to record the interview?

Thank you again. Are you ready to begin?

1. First, why do you teach developmental education courses?
2. You participated in three interdisciplinary professional learning network meetings. Tell me about how you felt during those meetings. What did you enjoy? What did you not enjoy?
3. Tell me about your experience conducting a peer observation. What did it feel like to observe a peer from a different discipline?

- a. Follow-up....what did you learn by observing a peer from a different teaching discipline?
4. Tell me about your experience receiving a peer observation. What did it feel like to have a peer from a different discipline observe you?
 - a. Follow-up....what did you learn by having a peer from a different teaching discipline observe you?
5. As you reflect on your participation in the professional learning network and in giving and receiving an observation, do you think this experience will cause you to modify your teaching practice in any manner?
 - a. If so, how?
 - b. If not, why?

APPENDIX D

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK MEETING JOURNAL PROMPTS

Professional Learning Network Meeting #1
Open-Ended Response Questions

Thank you for agreeing to complete the following open-ended response questions to help me learn more about your experiences participating in the professional learning network. Please know I will be using your responses as part of my formal research study. Your responses will remain confidential. By completing the responses, you are giving consent to continue participating in the study. The responses are voluntary, and if at any time you want or need to stop, please do so.

Name:

Discipline:

1. Why do you teach developmental education courses at GCC?
2. What is your teaching philosophy?
3. What do you hope to gain from your participation in this professional learning network?
4. What worries, concerns, or hesitation are you experiencing at the present moment regarding your participation in the professional learning network?

Professional Learning Network Meeting #2
Open-Ended Response Questions

Thank you for agreeing to complete the following open-ended response questions to help me learn more about your experiences participating in the professional learning network. Please know I will be using your responses as part of my formal research study. Your responses will remain confidential. By completing the responses, you are giving consent to continue participating in the study. The responses are voluntary, and if at any time you want or need to stop, please do so.

Name:

Discipline:

1. What do you think matters most pedagogically in the developmental education classroom?
2. What strategies or comments did you hear from colleagues in a different discipline that resonated with you? Why?
3. As you prepare for the peer observation, what instructional strategy or specific aspects of your teaching do you want your peer to pay particular attention? Why?
4. Describe your current feelings about your participation in this interdisciplinary professional learning network.

Professional Learning Network Meeting #3
Open-Ended Response Questions

Thank you for agreeing to complete the following open-ended response questions to help me learn more about your experiences participating in the professional learning network. Please know I will be using your responses as part of my formal research study. Your responses will remain confidential. By completing the responses, you are giving consent to continue participating in the study. The responses are voluntary, and if at any time you want or need to stop, please do so.

Name:

Discipline:

1. Describe what it felt like to give a peer observation.
2. Describe what it felt like to receive a peer observation.
3. What did you learn about your own teaching practice by conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation?
4. Has your participation in this professional learning network, along with conducting and receiving an interdisciplinary peer observation, caused you to consider changing or modifying your teaching practice? If so, please be specific how you plan to do so?

APPENDIX E
INTERDISCIPLINARY PEER OBSERVATION GUIDE

Observation Notes:

Please complete the observation notes during your partner's class. Make relevant notes/comments related to the area of focus you and your partner discussed in the pre-observation meeting. These notes will help guide you in writing a brief summary to share with your partner during the post-observation meeting.



Observation Summary

Please summarize your feedback regarding the specific instructional strategy or aspect of the class you were asked to pay particular attention.

Overall, what were the strongest aspects of this class?

Overall, what were areas of suggested improvement?

Post-Observation Meeting (approximately one hour)

Please follow these steps for the post-observation meeting. The goal is to create an open dialogue about the observation, focusing on instructional strategies.

Partner A (facilitate a 30-minute dialogue):

1. Allow Partner B to share his/her thoughts about the class he/she taught. What did Partner B think went really well? What did Partner B think did not go as planned?
2. Review your overall comments regarding the observation – strengths followed by areas for improvement.
3. Review your overall comments regarding the specific instructional strategy or area of focus to be observed.
4. Ask any additional questions you may have of Partner B regarding the observation. Ask Partner B if they have any questions about the feedback you provided.

SWITCH ROLES

Partner B (facilitate a 30-minute dialogue):

1. Allow Partner A to share his/her thoughts about the class he/she taught. What did Partner A think went really well? What did Partner A think did not go as planned?
2. Review your overall comments regarding the observation – strengths followed by areas for improvement.
3. Review your overall comments regarding the specific instructional strategy or area of focus to be observed.
4. Ask any additional questions you may have of Partner A regarding the observation. Ask Partner A if they have any questions about the feedback you provided.

Conclude Post-Observation Meeting

Engage in an open dialogue about how it felt both give and receive this observation. You will have an opportunity in our third professional learning network meeting to reflect more on the observation experience.