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Building a Research Community, Developing a Coherent Field of Study

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While many researchers have studied teacher leaders, a corresponding field of research on teacher leadership has been slow to develop. This narrative account charts our strategic efforts to build a community of scholars capable of strengthening teacher leadership as a field of study. It documents the parallel development of two entities, the Teacher Leadership Congress, a grassroots movement, and Division K, Section 2, a formal, institutional structure embedded within the American Educational Research Association. Using a community of practice lens (Wenger, 1998), we examine the ways in which these two entities complemented each other and galvanized a collection of individuals into a research community. We found that coordination between the Teacher Leadership Congress and Division K has resulted in a professional community that has facilitated co-construction of new understandings and identities, furthered teacher leadership research, and enhanced researchers' capacities to guide practice in ways that are urgently needed.

The process by which a topic of interest becomes a coherent field of study is neither formulaic nor guaranteed. New knowledge, societal pressures, even catalyzing events can bring awareness and attention to a topic. But under what conditions might that topic evolve into an accepted field of study with an identifiable research community, organized events, and professional norms? Education historians and philosophers have charted how a variety of fields have evolved, including teacher education (Labaree, 2008; Warren, 1985) and educational leadership (Campbell, Fleming, Newell & Bennion 1987; English, 2002). As their analyses illustrate, educational research agendas respond to and are shaped by both time and place.

Teacher leadership, as a field of study, has been developing since the 1980's when schools began to decentralize and democratize their administration and simultaneously increase teachers' opportunities for professionalism and decision-making (Conley, 1991; Firestone & Bader, 1992). In the decades that followed, scholars have attempted to build a knowledge base on teacher leadership, alternately expanding how they conceptualize teacher leadership and refining their focus to more clearly identify, describe, and measure teacher leadership.

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Throughout these decades, teacher leadership research has been situated at the margins of other related fields of study, primarily teacher education and educational leadership, where it has been unable to develop its own theories or accumulate into usable knowledge. The absence of a scholarly home for teacher leadership has inhibited the development of a coherent literature base, leading scholars to characterize the field as asynchronous (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). While many researchers have studied teacher leaders, the corresponding field of teacher leadership has been slow to develop into an organized research community and especially slow to guide the burgeoning practice of teacher leadership in schools.

This narrative account documents the authors' efforts to build a community of scholars dedicated to teacher leadership research. Through this depiction, we respond to the question: What happens when researchers attempt to create a scholarly community that supports the development of a coherent field of study? The case begins in 2013, when we submitted a proposal to the American Educational Research Association (AERA) to create a "special interest group" (SIG) dedicated to the study of teacher leadership. From there we describe the subsequent development of two new entities dedicated to teacher leadership, one a grassroots movement and the other a formal institutional structure.

This paper presents our examination of the ways in which these two contrasting and complementary entities influenced the development of a professional community of teacher leadership scholars and our reflections on what it means to be part of that research community. Our purpose is to uncover the potential affordances and constraints of community-building and to share insights that can inform the next steps of this research community.

Community-Building in Service of Scholarship

Our approach to the problem of forming professional community is informed by a complex backdrop of ideas and contexts. First, our examination draws broadly upon sociocultural learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and Wenger's (1998) writings on communities of practice. This literature reminds us about the situational and communal nature of learning and knowledge development. Second, our work is informed by the evolving, but also diffuse knowledge base produced by scholars of teacher leadership. Third, our efforts to create a community of teacher leadership scholars is bound by existing organizational structures, specifically AERA, which implicitly legitimize spaces in which education research communities function.

Community-Building

Our approach to addressing the need for professional community was informed by our beliefs about the communal nature of learning and the importance of interaction for developing new knowledge – concepts represented in the theoretical works of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. In *Situating Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Lave and Wenger (1991) present a sociocultural theory of learning that challenges the idea that learning is an individual endeavor. Lave and Wenger theorize that learning is situated at the point where agent, activity, and world converge. It is through interaction and negotiation of meaning that people learn. This interpretation posits learning as inherently social and mediated by the learners' previous experiences, the environment, and artifacts around which the learners are engaged. Lave and Wenger refer to the process by which people enter into this negotiation, first as apprentices and

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later as full participants, as "legitimate peripheral participation." As a result, individuals develop skilled identities and become members in a sustained community of practice.

To better conceptualize this process, imagine a group of teachers meeting to discuss student work. Each teacher brings their own understanding based on past experiences. They engage in dialog with one another, some assuming roles/identities as experts and others remaining more peripheral to the conversation. The conversation is mediated by the context, which includes community expectations, past performance, and new standards. Together the teachers negotiate meaning and attempt to arrive at a shared understanding. This situated learning process, marked by interaction and contextually mediated, may reproduce existing understandings or it may produce new ways of thinking. As a theory, situated learning is not something to implement in schools as you might implement a new curriculum or instructional strategy; rather, it can be a useful tool for analyzing whether we are creating the kinds of organizational spaces that facilitate interaction and learning. Similarly, we employ these concepts as a way to think about and assess our engagement in the teacher leadership community.

In later work, Wenger (1998) sought to identify and define key dimensions of communal learning. He explained that learning and knowing are contingent upon a process of negotiating meaning wherein our experiences and understandings are reified as real and true. Reification of meaning happens within communities of competent participants who are mutually engaged around a joint enterprise. Moreover, when communities intersect in boundary encounters, the process of brokering can shift the regime of competence and lead to a renegotiation of understanding. According to Wenger, controlling participation, and thus reification, shapes the kinds of meanings that can be created as well as the kinds of persons that participants can become.

Wenger's (1998) careful attention to the social dimensions of learning led him to consider how social interactions become the context for identity formation. Competent participation in a community of practice can facilitate "new dimensions of identification and negotiability, new forms of membership, multimembership, and ownership of meaning" (p. 268). Alternately, social interaction can also reproduce knowledge that is "reified, decontextualized, or proceduralized." Educational design influences the extent to which communities of practice engage in the production of new knowledge and identities.

> If an institutional setting for learning does not offer new forms of identification and negotiability - that is, meaningful forms of membership and empowering forms of ownership of meaning - then it will mostly reproduce the communities and economies of meaning outside of it. It will not open new trajectories of participation unless they are already opened somewhere else. Focusing on an institutionalized curriculum without addressing issues of identity thus runs the risk of serving only those who already have an identity of participation with respect to the material in other contexts. Others must be willing to abandon their claim to ownership of meaning…. (p. 269)

Without dedicated time to interact with colleagues, negotiate understandings, and make their own meaning, educators are relegated to reproducing understandings imposed by external entities. The power to negotiate meaning can facilitate the formation of new identities and lead to the reification of new knowledge.

Teacher Leadership as a Field of Study

While teachers have always found ways to exercise leadership in their schools, distinct leadership roles for teachers began to develop in the 1980's in relationship to widespread efforts to decentralize and democratize school leadership. Teacher professionalization, empowerment, and participation in decision making were considered effective strategies for improving school management, increasing teacher motivation, and facilitating overall school improvement (Conley, 1991; Firestone & Bader, 1992; Lichtenstein, McLaughlin & Knudsen, 1992). Concurrently, education leaders experimented with various forms of teacher leadership in schools including master, mentor, and lead teachers as well as career ladders and school-based management (Murphy & Beck, 1995; Smylie, 1997). Researchers found that these roles gave teachers increased responsibility; however, researchers also criticized these roles for their emphasis on individual job enhancement and for focusing teachers' attention on administrative matters at the expense of instruction and student learning (Hart, 1990; Smylie & Denny, 1990).

In response to these criticisms, new roles for teacher leaders began to emerge that focused specifically on collective capacity building and instructional improvement. Scholars and practitioners alike noted that teachers' knowledge and expertise afforded them informal authority and positioned them to lead collective, school-based, and instruction-oriented improvement efforts (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Hart, 1995; Smylie, Conley & Marks, 2002). Schools increasingly created formal roles such as instructional coach or coordinator as a way to tap into teachers' knowledge and leadership potential (Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Poglinco, et. al. 2003). These instructionally focused roles are commonly referred to as the "second wave" of teacher leadership and were thought to bring more attention and expertise to instructional improvement efforts (Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000). At the same time, some scholars raised concerns about the threat to teacher agency imposed by "... more systemic efforts by school and district officials to mobilize teacher leadership in the service of institutional agendas and external accountability" (Little, 2003, p. 404). York-Barr and Duke (2004) echoed this sentiment in their seminal review of teacher leadership, noting that teacher leadership had become increasingly linked to the rhetoric of educational improvement and reform.

Over time, the concept of teacher leadership has been nurtured in diverse school contexts as a way to address a range of problems and, as a result, scholarship on teacher leadership can be found in multiple educational subfields. Much of the research is situated within educational leadership owing to its original connection to administrative efforts to decentralize and democratize schooling (e.g., Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). Other scholars have located their work within teacher education, building upon connections to teacher professional learning, teacher mentoring, and instructional capacity building (e.g., Lieberman & Miller, 2011). Additional studies can be found by searching subfields as diverse as special education (e.g., Billingsley, 2007), instructional coaching (e.g., Marsh, et. al. 2008), data analysis (e.g., Henning, 2006), leadership preparation (Berg, Carver & Mangin, 2014), and policy (e.g., Hatch, White & Faigenbaum, 2005). The dynamic nature of teacher leadership makes it an interesting research topic; however, this dynamism also contributes to incoherence. With scholarship dispersed across subfields, it can be difficult to locate relevant studies; synthesize across findings; and identify the strengths and gaps in our knowledge base. Absent a coherent body of research, teacher leadership research struggles to inform practice, influence policy, and build upon previous research.

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AERA as Institutional Context

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) is internationally recognized as the foremost organization dedicated to facilitating and disseminating educational research. As such, AERA is uniquely positioned to shape educational research agendas across global contexts and disparate fields of study. Founded in 1916, today AERA has more than 25,000 registered members that include university faculty, researchers, evaluators, graduate students, research directors, and higher education administrators from multiple countries beyond North America (AERA, 2016). AERA's mission is "…to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good" (AERA, 2016). AERA dedicates substantial resources to research initiatives, publications, events, government relations, and professional advancement, as well as communications and outreach.

As a testament to its influence, AERA's governance structure includes an executive director, an elected council with legislative and policy-making responsibilities, as well as an executive board. AERA's membership structure includes twelve "divisions" that represent major areas of research within education, such as Curriculum Studies, Postsecondary Education, and Education Policy. In addition to the twelve divisions, AERA supports over 155 "special interest groups" or SIGs. Each SIG attends to a topic that is not directly supported by the division structure. Examples include "Catholic Education," "Paolo Freire," and "Mixed Methods Research." For the majority of members, the most visible aspect of AERA is the annual meeting, which lasts five days and attracts roughly 15,000 attendees. The 2017 meeting included 2,562 sessions, 75 receptions, 162 business meetings, 108 exhibit booths, and 10,900 presenting authors (AERA, 2017).

Given its prominence, AERA has the capacity to shape international research agendas as well as the standards that inform how research is conducted. Through its formalized structures, AERA explicitly identifies high priority research arenas, elevates their visibility, and dedicates resources to their sustained examination. Members' engagement within these organizational structures further reinforces implicit professional norms that legitimize research methods and modes of epistemological engagement. Through a combination of explicit and implicit messaging, AERA influences what kinds of research are (and are not) valued.

A Narrative Approach

In writing this account, we draw on methods that align with components of historical documentation and reflective practice. While we cannot be certain that our portrayal uniformly reflects the experience of all persons involved, we believe the validity of this narrative account is strengthened by our careful and collaborative attention to documentation and analysis. While we do not characterize this narrative account as an empirical study, we drew upon a rich store of documents, artifacts, and online records to fact check our account. These documents include our original SIG application; survey data collected from prospective SIG members; past AERA programs; materials from the Teacher Leadership Congresses (e.g., agendas, discussion notes, exit surveys); Division K, Section 2 proposal submissions and reviewer ratings; as well as online conversation threads from the community's listserve. This narrative account also draws upon our personal recollections.

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As part of the writing process, we articulated the beliefs that have informed our work together over the past five years, our recollection of the events as they occurred, and how we understand the evolution of our extended teacher leadership community. As part of the analytic process, we worked to interpret our experience in light of Wenger's (1998) community of practice theory. On the rare occasions when our recollections differed, we deepened and extended our conversation to arrive at a mutual understanding.

The diverse experiences and perspectives that each of us brings to this work strengthened and complemented our collaborative efforts and this narrative account. Berg's research has focused on National Board Certification and teachers' development as leaders. Her work supporting leaders within and across schools provides her with a close perspective on the world of teaching and learning in K-12 contexts. Carver is an expert on the topic of pre-service teachers and the use of educative mentoring for teachers' growth and leadership development. With her colleagues, she runs a masters-level teacher leadership program and has been instrumental in guiding state-level policy decisions related to teacher leadership. Similarly, Mangin conducts research in the fields of instructional teacher leadership and coaching. Through her writing, outreach, and mentoring of new scholars, Mangin has brought a critical lens to this emerging field of study.

Building a Teacher Leadership Research Community

We begin this narrative with a description of the problem—the need for professional community—and how it first manifested for us in the context of AERA's 2012 annual meeting. Second, we outline the steps we took to propose a scholarly community under the aegis of AERA's SIG structure. Third, we describe the evolution of the "Teacher Leadership Congress" across five years. Fourth, we describe the parallel development of AERA's Division K, Section 2: Teacher Leadership Within and Beyond the Classroom. We conclude by examining the interactions of these two complementary groups, and reflect on how they collectively contribute to the establishment of a scholarly community and more coherent field of study.

Need for Professional Community

As scholars of teacher leadership, we regularly attend AERA to share our work and to seek colleagues and scholarship that both expand our knowledge and push our thinking. As luck would have it, our three papers were assigned to the same roundtable session at the 2012 annual meeting in Vancouver. The seats at the table were filled with presenters, forcing approximately two dozen interested scholars to cluster around, straining to hear and participate in the conversation. Following the paper presentations, conversation turned to our situation: Why were teacher leadership papers commonly placed at overcrowded roundtables? Why was the topic of teacher leadership scattered across teacher education and school administration sessions? We had no home at AERA, no delineated research community within which to interact, negotiate meaning, and co-construct new understandings about teacher leadership. We needed a way to connect more efficiently and effectively with a community of scholars exploring shared questions.

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While many scholars came from one of two subfields—school leadership or teacher education—there also were boundary spanners, such as ourselves, dedicated to bridging the divide between the two fields. In general, all of these teacher leadership scholars expressed frustration with the siloed structure of our research community, where neither subfield fully represented the work of teacher leadership. Teacher leader scholars regularly present their scholarship at the annual convenings of flagship educational leadership and teacher education organizations; however, there was no dedicated venue where leadership and teacher education scholars could gather to discuss teacher leadership.

Given the dual nature of teacher leadership, we wondered how to best network with colleagues, disseminate our work, and build the research base on teacher leadership. What conferences would present opportunities to network with like-minded researchers? Which journals would allow us to converse with and influence this interdisciplinary field? Which grant programs would understand and support teacher leadership as a reform ideal? These questions yielded few answers and we left Vancouver with a commitment to explore the creation of a SIG dedicated to teacher leadership. Our goal was to establish a space for communal learning that could serve the professional needs of scholars in this emerging field.

Proposing a Scholarly Community

Throughout 2012-2013, we educated ourselves about the process of creating a SIG and became more confident that a SIG would create the structure required for mutual engagement and the production of new knowledge. However, we were unsure whether there would be sufficient interest in forming such a community. A community requires members' commitment to engage in joint enterprise and develop shared understandings. Would others see value in creating a designated space for teacher leadership and would they agree that the SIG structure could facilitate community building?

To gauge the level of community support and organize volunteers to assist with the SIG application, we widely distributed an open invitation for teacher leadership scholars to convene at the 2013 annual meeting in San Francisco, CA. Our goal was to attract at least a dozen willing collaborators. In fact, the meeting space filled with more than 40 scholars similarly seeking new colleagues with a common interest in teacher leadership. The AERA conference design, with teacher leadership papers spread across divisions and inserted into semi-related sessions, had not provided opportunities for teacher leader scholars to interact. This event, therefore, represented a novel opportunity to share news of current research projects, recommended journals, and upcoming publications/conferences. The robust turnout underscored the need to organize. Energized by the experience of connecting, we spent the next year collecting signatures and completing the application paperwork to establish a new SIG that could provide a home for this interdisciplinary group of scholars.

As part of the application process, we collected data to support the need for a SIG. We identified 85 papers from the upcoming annual meeting that included in their title or description the term "teacher leadership" or terms that name manifestations of it, such as "mentoring," "coaching" or "teacher action research." In addition, we identified an additional 76 papers that referenced concepts related to teacher leadership, such as "distributed leadership," "teacher agency" or "professional learning communities." We then sorted the sessions by Section and SIG (see Figure 1) to better understand the distribution of such research papers across AERA. In fact, nearly one-third of the 161 papers fell into Division A: Administration, Organization and Leadership (n=55) and approximately one-tenth fell into Division K: Teaching and Teacher

Education (n=22). Most papers relevant to researchers of teacher leadership were presented within various SIGs (n=64). These data reinforced our perception that the interdisciplinary nature of teacher leadership called for the development of a SIG as opposed to nesting teacher leadership within a single AERA division.

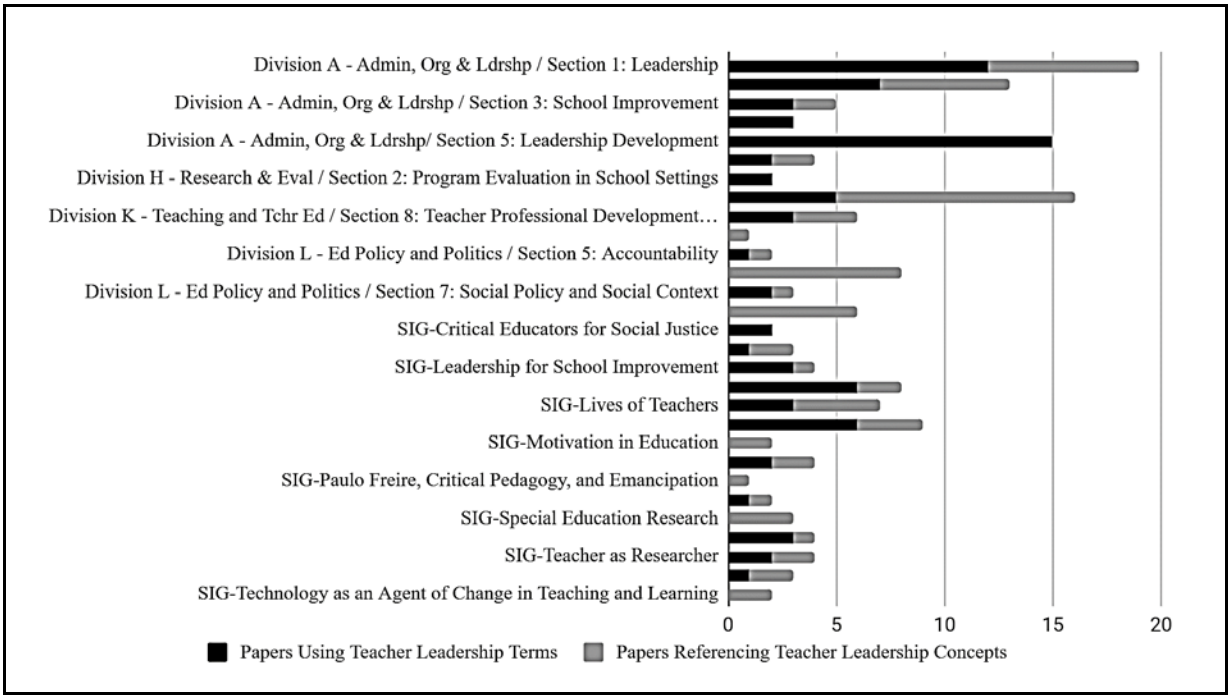

Figure 1. Distribution of papers addressing teacher leadership at AERA 2014, by division, section and SIG (n=161) (Artifact from 2014 Teacher Leadership Congress)

Additionally, we used a newly created listserve to survey those who attended the 2013 informal gathering about their reasons for supporting the development of a new SIG. Drawing on those interests (e.g., to share resources, to network, to support each other as scholars), we drafted and submitted our SIG proposal with the following mission: "to improve teaching and learning by providing an interdisciplinary and collaborative network to support high quality research that informs the policy and practice of teacher leadership, and guides efforts to maximize the leadership influence of teachers in education."

Ahead of the 2014 annual meeting, we received news that our proposal had been denied and a new section within Division K: Teaching and Teacher Education would be created. This new section, Teacher Leadership: Leading within the Classroom and Beyond, would be a venue for the review and presentation of research about teacher leadership at AERA's annual meeting. Recognizing that AERA sections do not offer the same opportunity for multi-disciplinary resource-sharing and networking that we sought to facilitate, we proceeded to create a new scholarly community outside the traditional structures of AERA divisions, sections, and SIGs. This space came to be known as the Teacher Leadership Congress.

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Evolution of the Teacher Leadership Congress: 2014 - 2018

Unbound by institutional structures, we explored the possibility of creating something new with the Congress. As we began to outline a plan for this meeting, an initial set of design principles emerged.

- No speakers would be allowed; the purpose would be for participants to interact with and learn from each other.
- The program would feature structured opportunities to network with new colleagues and potential collaborators.
- Participants would have a choice of activities and interest areas to explore within the program.
- Practicing teacher leaders would be invited and encouraged to attend.

We reserved meeting space as an affiliated group so that we could meet during AERA's annual meeting, sent an open invitation to those who signed the SIG petition, and encouraged them to tell others. In recognition of our efforts to initiate a SIG community, the leadership of Divisions A and K agreed to reimburse the cost of room rental for this first year.

2014: What is teacher leadership? The 2014 Teacher Leadership Congress was attended by approximately 60 participants who came and went throughout the three-hour program. In the first part of that meeting, we looked together at the collection of 2014 paper titles that had been catalogued in our SIG application. Aware of the range of divergent ways scholars and practitioners define the term "teacher leadership," this collection had been culled with the widest possible view of what could be considered teacher leadership. That is, papers that addressed any form of formal or informal influence in or outside of schools by individuals who work or identify as teachers in any type of setting were included. At this Philadelphia, PA meeting, teams were asked to sort these titles as to whether or not they believed these papers fit what they considered to be teacher leadership. Strong opinions were voiced about what counts as a "teacher" (e.g., How far in time and job tasks can an individual be from teaching and still be considered a teacher?) and what counts as "leadership" (e.g., Can this label be used for informal and even unintentional influence of teachers?)

In the second portion of the meeting, we used an unconference format in which participants were invited to propose any topic or question pertaining to teacher leadership that they wished to discuss with others. After topics were raised (see Appendix A), each was assigned to a table and participants were invited to self-select one or more tables to join for continued discussion. According to exit slips completed at the end of the meeting, many participants left energized by the community we had formed and committed to keeping it going. The online platform that had been created to support the virtual collaboration for our SIG application became a venue for sharing meeting notes and extending the meeting discussion beyond the Congress event.

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2015: Connecting and collaborating. In 2015, attendance at the Teacher Leader Congress in Chicago, IL grew from 60 to 75 participants. To build upon the previous year's conversations, documentation from the 2014 meeting was analyzed to identify seven topics that arose in that year's conversation (see Figure 2). The 2015 meeting thus offered participants an opportunity to collaborate around shared understandings of what was known and needed with regard to these areas of teacher leadership research and practice.

TL Definition
- What the heck IS "teacher leadership"?
- Must it be defined? Why? Why not?
- Who must be involved?

TL Practice
- What do teacher leaders do? Who decides?
- What determines whether and how roles are defined? What about accountability?
- What characterizes formal/ informal TL? Why does it matter?

TL Purpose and Impact
- Who/what does teacher leadership serve?
- What are the many possible outputs? The various potential outcomes?
- How can impact be documented?

TL Preparation, Selection and Identity
- How are teachers motivated/inspired to lead?
- How are teachers selected to become leaders?
- How does teacher leadership influence identity?

TL Development
- What do TLs need to know and be able to do?
- Who is responsible for developing TLs? Who should/can be involved?
- How is development monitored/assessed?
- What kind(s) of experiences do teachers need to have to develop as leaders?

Conditions for TL
- What organizational structures are essential?
- What cultural or socio-political conditions are required?
- How are they created? Who is responsible?

TL Role in Distributed Leadership (Co-performing Leadership with Admins)
- What are common co-performance models?
- How might the interaction among administrators and teacher leaders affect school performance?
- How (logistically) do they share leadership?
- What do administrators have to know and do to maximize teacher leadership?

Figure 2. Teacher leadership topics guiding 2015 Teacher Leadership Congress conversation (Artifact from the 2015 Teacher Leadership Congress)
Note: "TL" was used to reference both "teacher leadership" and "teacher leader" as determined by context and the perspective of the reader.

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In the unconference portion of the meeting, participants again had the opportunity to name and convene around topics they generated (see Appendix A). This time, structure was provided to support table groups as action teams that could continue collaborating throughout the year. Specifically, each group was asked to identify a title, focus, one or two action steps, a convener, and a communication plan. Four of the groups succeeded in extending conversation beyond the meeting: The Coalition of Teacher Leadership Graduate Programs exchanged ideas; the International Teacher Leader Conference team grew to become the International Teacher Leadership Conference hosted by the University of Florida's Lastinger Center in March 2017; the Writing Group on Teacher Leadership and Social Capital formed a GoogleGroup and exchanged literature; and the Planning Team for the 2016 AERA Meeting designed the next gathering of the Congress.

2016: Agreeing to disagree. With new voices on the planning team, the 2016 agenda sought to recognize and address variation in how researchers employed the term teacher leadership. At this Washington, D.C. meeting, a jigsaw structure was used to engage participants in a text-based discussion of the many ways scholars have historically thought about dimensions of teacher leadership. Participants were also challenged to identify key ways in which their conceptions of teacher leadership diverged. Feedback indicated that participants appreciated grounding the conversation in shared literature.

Building upon the success and positive feedback of prior years, the unconference session was repeated. Of the 12 topics generated, 9 were not only unique to those of prior years but also much more specific. Appendix A compares table topics across the series of meetings (see Appendix A).

2017: Examining the state of the literature. The planning team for the 2017 Congress in San Antonio, TX was intrigued by the idea of running the meeting as a true "congress." Recognizing that research on teacher leadership had not accumulated into a coherent body of knowledge, the team wondered if participants might be interested in collaborating throughout the year on a few topics or frameworks. The agenda for this Congress, therefore, was designed to provide time for text-informed deliberations that could lead to resolutions, amendments, even a potential vote on key topics and emerging conceptual models that could be the focus of heightened attention in the year ahead. The 60 participating researchers and practitioners, however, were not interested in making such a move.

Participants did organize themselves around the four pre-identified caucus topics (definition, development, practice, and impact; see Figure 3); explored those topics with colleagues using provided literature and contributions of their own; and shared their collective reflections on the relative strengths of the literature that existed in each of these areas, but these conversations raised more questions than answers. Rather than producing resolutions they could propose to the Congress for a vote of collective commitment, the groups identified and shared out key themes regarding questions that remained and research that was needed.

TL Definition & Typologies
- What IS teacher leadership?
- By what dimensions can/should teacher leadership be defined?

Development of TL
- How do teachers become teacher leaders?
- How do teachers become effective as leaders?

Practice of TL
- What do teacher leaders do?
- What types of roles might they hold?

Impact of TL
- How do teacher leaders make an impact?
- What might they influence and how?

Figure 3. 2017 Congress caucus groups (Artifact from the 2017 Teacher Leadership Congress)

2018: Unpacking contextual contrasts and commonalities. In advance of the 2018 meeting, held in New York City, the planning team recognized the expectation of significant diversity among Congress participants. Scholars had contacted us from Israel, England, the Netherlands, and China to participate. In addition, the New York City Department of Education's Teacher Career Pathways program agreed to co-sponsor the event, nominating teacher leaders to join the planning team and promoting the event to teacher leaders throughout the district. We wanted to capitalize upon the opportunity to explore key contrasts and commonalities across participants' distinct contexts, roles, and perspectives.

In the first half of the program, an interactive exercise landed participants in heterogeneous table groups where they were invited to share details about teacher leadership in their unique context:

- Who/what legitimizes teacher leaders in your context?
- Who/what motivates and supports teacher leaders in your context?
- What is the purpose/objective of teacher leadership in your context?
- In your context, what methods do teacher leaders use when they work with their colleagues?

These four questions originated from the work of the 2016 Congress, in which we attempted to identify key ways in which our definitions of teacher leadership diverge (Berg & Zoellick, 2017). These discussions were followed by an attempt to identify key contrasts and commonalities, and to share observations and questions that arose about how context matters in teacher leadership.

In the second half of the Congress, we returned to the unconference structure of years past, probing new and persistent themes (see Appendix A).

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Evolution of Division K, Section 2: 2014-2018

As the Teacher Leadership Congress was being formed, the new Division K subsection on teacher leadership was also developing. Understanding how this parallel development unfolded helps to explain how the two entities emerged as complementary groups.

Our SIG application was submitted early in 2014, just as a two-year moratorium on the approval of new SIGs was lifted. This moratorium was put in place to slow the growth of SIGs that (a) duplicated areas of study already addressed by AERA and/or (b) represented the narrow interests of a small group of scholars. Thus, new applications were scrutinized for their ability to attract new membership within an interest area not yet served by AERA. Of note, new applications also needed approval by the division vice-presidents, who were tasked with ensuring the organizational health of their respective bodies. As was later explained to us, our application came at a time when Division K leadership saw the addition of teacher leadership as a means for expanding and strengthening its membership. Since divisions have greater authority than SIGs within the AERA hierarchy, our application was denied and a new section on teacher leadership subsequently added to Division K. This new section, Teacher Leadership: Leading Within and Beyond the Classroom (teachers as leaders, policymakers, community activists and decision-makers), promised to

> [Invite] investigations of teachers who demonstrate leadership, expert knowledge, and advocacy both from within the classroom and/or school settings, as well as beyond individual or local school contexts. This could include examinations into the definition and conceptualization of teacher leadership, the impact of teacher leadership on practice/curriculum/policy, innovative programs and models that support the identification and development of teacher leaders, case studies of teachers who lead, teacher research, etc. (AERA, 2014)

In a nod to our failed SIG proposal, we were invited by the incoming Division K Vice-President to be inaugural chairs of the new section. Mangin and Carver agreed; Berg retained her focus on supporting the Teacher Leadership Congress.

In the intervening years, Section 2 has regularly attracted a wide range of submissions from new and established scholars across the globe. In 2015, the first year of the new section, eight program sessions were created, featuring 26 papers. Four years later, the section had grown to ten program sessions and 34 papers. The number of sessions or "slots" is determined by the overall number of proposals submitted the previous year. Proposals are selected for presentation through a peer review process where each blinded proposal is read and scored by three independent reviewers who are also AERA members. The section co-chairs then collaborate to identify and select the top-scoring proposals and arrange them into sessions (see Appendix B).

The explicit goal of program co-chairs all four years has been to select the largest number of quality papers possible for the annual meeting as a way to bring as many diverse voices as possible into the conversation about teacher leadership research. The authors selected to present at the annual meeting represent diverse institutions including universities, governmental agencies, professional organizations, private foundations, consulting groups, think tanks, and K-12 schools from the U.S., Australia, Canada, England, Scotland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Israel, Kazakhstan, South Korea, and China.

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Trends are notable in Section 2 submissions over time. Among the proposals selected for presentation annually, the majority continue to use qualitative methods with small scale convenience samples; however, the number of quantitative and mixed method submissions has been slowly rising. In addition, over time successful submissions are more likely to clarify the context of the study, such as subject area, grade level, and urbanicity of the context. Successful proposals increasingly represent a range of topics, theoretical frames, and methodologies that showcase the growing sophistication and nuance of research on teacher leadership. Moreover, to be successful within this section, definitions of teacher leadership must be clear and teacher leadership must be foundational to the analysis. Viewed in aggregate, popular proposal topics include: teacher leaders as activists and change agents; teacher leaders as instructional coaches and mentors; teacher leader roles, relationships, and identity; teacher leader development; and the practice of teacher leadership. Notably, proposals on the impact of teacher leadership have been scarce.

Two Complementary Communities

In our retelling of this narrative, we sequentially described the creation and development of two distinct groups: one organizationally sanctioned (Division K, Section 2) and the other developed and sustained through grassroots organizing (Teacher Leadership Congress). In reality, however, they occurred concurrently and the overlap in mission and membership between the two groups is significant. Perhaps the greatest distinction, then, is function: One serves primarily as a venue for public presentation and critique; another provides new and expanded opportunities for professional learning and networking. The community went from having no home to having two homes, among which we find a mutually beneficial synergy. This dynamic is illustrated here through three powerful outcomes: the promotion of new scholarship; the strengthening of community membership; and the emergence of shared understandings and priorities.

Promoting new scholarship. When the Division K section on teacher leadership was first announced, it was important to spread the word widely. Section 2 represented a new and timely addition to the more traditional sections devoted to teacher education, including subject area preparation, initial program development, and ongoing professional learning. The dedication of a section to teacher leadership would bring visibility that could be a catalyst for more research in this area. But, its success depended on high quality proposal submissions. Although the news of this new section was announced through routine channels (e.g., the annual call for proposals; the Division K newsletter), division leadership was hopeful that our growing teacher leadership network would help to spread the word.

Indeed, the listserve, which today connects more than 300 individuals, became an important promotional tool. Each year the listserve was used to solicit proposals for the upcoming annual meeting and to influence the content of those proposals. Listserve subscribers were reminded to mine the archive of Congress documentation to help them identify themes worth further exploration, and they were encouraged to pursue new collaborations with Congress colleagues as they explored those questions. Subscribing to the listserve and participating in the Teacher Leadership Congress are, of course, not required to submit a proposal to the section, yet a high percentage of successful proposals come from members of this ad-hoc group. Similarly, Section 2 presenters who were previously unfamiliar with the Congress often learned about it at AERA and subsequently joined the Congress, further enriching the discussions occurring there.

This symbiotic relationship served both entities well. Notably, each year Division K Vice-Presidents have publicly acknowledged the value of this network for promoting the section and recruiting strong proposals that expand what we know about teacher leadership.

Strengthening membership. Additionally, both the Congress and new section stand to benefit from a community of members that work together in complementary ways. Throughout AERA, many sections struggle with the challenge of identifying sufficient numbers of knowledgeable reviewers. The Congress, however, is able to mobilize its members to volunteer in this critical role. As a result, nearly 70% of reviewers have served in a review capacity for at least four years. As a set, these reviewers are knowledgeable of the literature in teacher leadership and many are experienced researchers in the field. Because these individuals take their role seriously, it is not uncommon to hear from them during the review process with messages of concern. For example, during the first year of the section, one reviewer shared disappointment over the quality of proposals received, as well as high hopes for the new section. He wrote:

> Of the eight I received, I was only able to recommend two as "accept" and even those two would not have made it in a stronger field. I really want this new section to work—it has so much potential—but I hope others had a better pool of inaugural proposals. :-((Reviewer Email)

This unsolicited comment conveyed a sense of ownership, possibly even a belief that this reviewer felt part of creating something unique and special.

Similarly, in a gesture suggesting shared responsibility for the work, early reviewers volunteered criteria for assessing proposal submissions for this new section. Presumably, they knew that inaugural submissions would shape expectations for years to come and they were invested in facilitating a strong start. In essence, these reviewers assumed responsibility for shaping the norms of this new community. Of note, Congress participation does not place any demands on participants; they simply attend for as much or as little of the event as they like. Conversely, Section 2 encourages participation in the time-sensitive and time-consuming task of scoring proposals. While there are drawbacks to each of these approaches, the relationships built in the Congress serve as encouragement to participate in Section 2, and participation as a reviewer or presenter in Section 2 often inspires members to attend the Congress. Thus, again, we see a dynamic and mutual relationship emerge.

Shared understandings and priorities. Finally, our archival analysis found multiple examples of how the two groups facilitated conversations that promoted greater understanding of teacher leadership as a coherent field of study. Proposal reviewers had strong ideas about what a good proposal requires and how it should be evaluated. Meanwhile, Congress participants offered invaluable feedback on what topics they wanted to explore and what questions were important. Drawing on these multiple and overlapping conversations, we found ourselves to be mirrors for the group's observations and wonderings.

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Through the Congress, we encouraged members to refine thinking within the field, such as clarifying definitions of teacher leadership; promoting methodological and theoretical rigor in research on teacher leadership; and investigating impact in teacher leadership programming and practice. Likewise, we drew upon the Section 2 discussions to promote meaningful and rigorous research through the auspices of AERA. This cross-pollination of ideas helped shape both endeavors. For example, Congress planners identified priorities and laid plans informed by these observations, while Section 2 leaders were empowered to revise the Section 2 call to include language recognizing how varied approaches to teacher leadership may surface across the span of one's career.

> This section invites investigations of teachers who demonstrate leadership and advocacy from the classroom and/or school setting, as well as beyond individual or local school contexts. This could include examinations into the definition and conceptualization of teacher leadership; the practices, skills and knowledge necessary for teacher leadership; the contexts, conditions, and/or impacts of teacher leadership; the program and models that support the identification and development of teacher leaders at all career stages. (AERA, 2016 revision)

Through these small but cumulative efforts, we sought to create a community that would bring enhanced rigor and intentionality to the study of teacher leadership.

Final Reflections

This narrative charts our efforts to create an intentional community of practice where scholars of teacher leadership can learn together and work toward a shared knowledge base. Our actions were motivated by the lack of a scholarly home for teacher leadership and were directly shaped by time and place. Increased interest in teacher leadership over the past decade suggested the time was right and AERA appeared promising as a potential place to build a home for teacher leadership.

According to Wenger (1998), "We must remember that our institutions are designs and that our designs are hostage to our understanding, perspectives, and theories" (p. 10). The institutional design of AERA, with its siloed divisions and lack of space dedicated to teacher leadership research, had the potential to limit participation, inhibit interaction, and undermine community building for our group. At the same time, inclusion within the formal structure of AERA offered us both resources and legitimacy. Embracing both the affordances and constraints inherent to AERA's institutional structure, we found that coordination between the Teacher Leadership Congress and Division K, Section 2 has resulted in the establishment of a new professional community. Moreover, this new community has facilitated co-construction of new understandings and identities, furthered teacher leadership research, and enhanced researchers' capacities to guide practice in ways that are urgently needed.

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The challenge of developing a community of practice for teacher leadership scholars was steep. Foremost, AERA's decision to situate teacher leadership within a single division conflicted with our sociocultural belief in the value of community that draws from diverse educational traditions. According to Wenger, the construction of new knowledge is dependent upon a process of negotiating meaning. Limiting participation in the negotiation process limits the kinds of meanings that can be produced. Thus, a community composed of members from a single AERA division would be more likely to perpetuate existing understandings rather than stimulate co-construction of new knowledge. From the perspective of sociocultural learning theory, a community of practice for teacher leadership should create opportunities for boundary encounters and brokering of knowledge across epistemological orientations. Importantly, mutual engagement between members of the Teacher Leadership Congress and Division K, Section 2 has helped to bring diverse points of view into the discussion.

Our desire to build a community of practice was also cemented in the understanding that participation is inherently political. The professional norms of AERA commonly value empirical research, institutional affiliation, and "expert" knowledge. Thus, the power to negotiate meaning is dependent upon one's access to membership. Those with limited access have decreased opportunity for ownership of meaning and identity development. At the same time, efforts to constrain the regime of competence diminish an institution's capacity to develop new knowledge. In contrast, we recognized the need for meaningful membership and ownership of meaning. Therefore, we aimed to create a space where all willing participants, including teacher leaders who are not members of AERA, could develop their identity as teacher leader scholars through a process of mutual interaction around joint enterprise. The lack of hierarchy, expert speakers, or a preconceived developmental trajectory have all helped to shift the regime of competence and facilitate identity development, ultimately contributing to new knowledge that further develops teacher leadership as a field of study.

Together, the Teacher Leadership Congress and Division K, Section 2 have created the conditions needed to bring individual and often disconnected scholars of teacher leadership into a new and robust community of practice. As a result, this new scholarly community is better positioned to bring coherence and legitimacy to an otherwise fragmented body of research; and as such, is uniquely able to promote critical and timely conversations and build capacity among members for stronger and more relevant scholarship.

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Appendix A
Teacher Leadership Congress Unconference Topics by Year

Year	Session Topics
2014	1. TL Definitions 2. TL Purposes 3. Organizational Support 4. Distributed Leadership; Working with Administrators 5. TL Preparation and Development 6. TL Practice 7. TL & Inquiry 8. Assessing Impact
2015	1. Exploring the Theory; Framework of TL 2. International TL Conference 3. Supporting Grad Students in TL Research 4. Coalition of Graduate Programs 5. Planning TL Seminar for AERA 2016 6. TL and Leadership Development 7. Connecting TL Research and Practice 8. Research-Writing Group on TL and Social Capital 9. TL and Policy
2016	1. Strategies to Support Teacher Leadership 2. Formal/ Informal Teacher Leadership: Paid or unpaid? Certificate or not? 3. Developmental Definitions of TL 4. State/National TL Policy 5. Synergy within TL groups: True collaboration vs contrived collegiality 6. Identifying Professional Practice Leaders 7. Distributed Leadership/ Relationship with Principals 8. Culture Change 9. Teacher Leader as Positive & Negative Influence 10. School Reform Design and Implementation 11. Dimensions of TL (extension of prior discussion) 12. Planning Next Year's Congress
2017	*An unconference format was not utilized within the 2017 Congress agenda.*

Appendix A (continued)

Year	Session Topics
2018	1. PD for Teacher Leadership 2. TL as Counter-cultural Work 3. How to Create Structures that do not Inhibit TL 4. (How) Should We Study TL? 5. Frameworks for How Teacher Leaders Learn 6. Bridging Research of Academics and Practitioners 7. Key Practices for Preparing Teacher Leaders 8. Strategies for TL to Overcome Roadblocks

Note: In Congress documentation, "TL" was routinely used as an abbreviation that might refer to "teacher leader(s)" or "teacher leadership," as interpreted by the reader, depending on context.

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Appendix B
Division K, Section 2 Session Titles by Year

Year, Location and AERA Meeting Theme	**Session Titles (includes Symposia, Paper Sessions and Roundtables)**	**Total # Papers Presented**
2015 Chicago, IL *Toward Justice: Culture, Language, and Heritage in Education Research and Praxis*	1. Teacher Leaders as Activists for Social Justice 2. Developing Teacher Leaders 3. Efficacy and Effectiveness of Mentor Teacher Leaders 4. Teacher Leaders Engaged in Collaborative Learning 5. Teacher Leaders' Influence on Content Instruction 6. International Perspectives on Teacher Leader Development 7. Developing Formal Structures to Facilitate Teacher Leadership in Job-Embedded Professional Development 8. Supportive Contexts for Teacher Leadership	26
2016 Washington, DC *Public Scholarship to Educate Diverse Democracies*	1. Teacher Leader Learning Needs 2. Learning from Teacher Leader Preparation Programs 3. Teacher Leadership and Teacher Agency 4. Systems Support for Teacher Leadership 5. Developing Teacher Leaders 6. Teacher Leader Agency and Influence 7. Teacher Leaders and Collaborative Inquiry 8. Teacher Leadership for Inclusive and Diverse Societies 9. Defining Teacher Leadership	32

Appendix B (continued)

Year, Location and AERA Meeting Theme	**Session Titles (includes Symposia, Paper Sessions and Roundtables)**	**Total # Papers Presented**
2017 San Antonio, TX *Knowledge to Action: Achieving the Promise of Equal Educational Opportunity*	1. Building and Leveraging Teacher-Leaders' Expertise to Improve Students' Writing: National Writing Project's College-Ready Writers Program 2. Building Instructional Capacity Through Teacher Leadership 3. Structural, Conceptual, Interpersonal, and Critical Challenges to Teacher Leadership 4. Teacher Leadership, Learning and Change 5. Teacher Leadership: New Conceptualizations for Research and Practice 6. Teacher Leaders' Identity Development 7. Working Toward Teacher Ownership and Meaningful School Improvement 8. Teacher Leaders: Agency, Advocacy, and Change	31
2018 New York, NY *The Dreams, Possibilities, and Necessity of Public Education*	1. Contrasting Rural and Urban Teacher Leadership 2. Teacher Leader Identity Development: Cross-National Perspectives 3. Teacher Leaders as Change Agents 4. Teacher Leaders Initiating Change for a More Just Society 5. Looking Back, Looking Forward: Exploring Conceptual Frameworks of Teacher Leadership 6. From Policy to Practice: Investigating Teacher Leadership as a Level of Educational Change 7. Multiple Pathways to Teacher Leadership: Elevating the Profession 8. Large-scale Teacher Leader Initiatives: Findings From the Field 9. Teacher Leaders (Re)Imagining Professional Learning Opportunities 10. The Multidimensional Enactment of Teacher Leadership	34