

**Co/productive practitioner relations for children with SLCN: an  
affect inflected agentic frame**

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*This paper examines how school-based practitioners supporting children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) use particular social capital relations. Social capital theory together with selected 'Productive Pedagogies' items, are applied to re-frame and understand the co/production of support for such children. Empirical data from the 'Language for All' study, which investigates SLCN provision in schools in England, are analysed to understand support network social capital. Novel insights on the types and purposes of interprofessional connectedness within SLCN support networks, in particular how relational agency is inflected by affect, are offered.*

**Keywords:** speech, language and communication needs; interprofessional; social capital; co/productive practices; affect; agency

Principles of joined-up practice are foregrounded within current children's public services policy in England, where the Children and Families Act (CFA, UK Parliament, 2014) and the related Code of Practice (CoP, DfE, 2015) provide the statutory basis for children's rights and service entitlements. An overarching aim is to strengthen co-practice amongst schools and other child-sector agencies, and to locate the assessed needs of the child 'at the centre' of co-practice (HM Treasury, 2003). Internationally there is recognition that the skills, knowledge and resource necessary to achieve educational and social inclusion and wellbeing for children are distributed across professionals and agencies, and successful co-practice is required to achieve these vital aims for children (IOM & NRC, 2015; Burgess et al., 2016). This paper reports a case study in England which we would argue offers insights on collaborative working with wider relevance.

To strengthen interprofessional and cross child-sector connections successfully, greater analytical insight is required about the stocks of knowledge and skills practitioners bring to interprofessional practice (Forbes & McCartney, 2010). Many researchers and research groups globally have examined issues and questions of ‘multi-’, ‘inter-’, and ‘trans’-disciplinarity amongst professions, agencies and sectors within children’s services (see e.g. Forbes & Watson, 2012). How child sector professionals work together in England had been a central research focus from the mid-nineties (e.g. D’Amour et al., 2005; Malin & Morrow, 2007; Gascoigne, 2006; Edwards, 2005). However, between 2010-2015 the UK Coalition Government placed less emphasis on education, health and social care collaboration in England. Renewed encouragement for agencies to address children’s needs collaboratively and holistically via the CFA and CoP requires further insights on the interprofessional knowledge, skills, and practices that work best in a pupil support ‘team’ or network. More specifically, investigating how professionals have embraced the ‘child-at-the-centre’ (HM Treasury, 2003) core message within their practice, and which practice knowledge and skills currently enable this, is timely.

Placing the child at the centre of co-practice re-designs what constitutes ‘good’ interprofessional working, moving away from practitioners’ personal attributes towards co-practice in any support setting, involving a multiplicity of professionals investing their time and expertise. Such co-practice relations require clear delineation and mapping in individual contexts. This paper examines interprofessional, interagency support networks for children with identified speech language and communication needs (SLCN) in one English setting. SLCN here encompasses

children for whom these are the primary reasons for receiving school support, or accompany other disabling conditions.

### **A social capital perspective**

Here we are concerned with analytical frameworks that examine the materialities of inter-practitioner micro (interpersonal) relations functioning at the meso (institutional, here school) level of co-practice, because, we argue, these ‘inter’-relations are ‘under-theorized, under-conceptualized and under-analysed’ (Forbes & McCartney, 2010, p.325).

We use social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986) which offers analytical purchase on the core relations of co-practice, and a disposition for certain practices (Bourdieu 1990). Social capital emphasises the ‘glue’ that holds social relationships together, here applied to child language support team relations within a multi-level analytical model. providing insight on the types, purposes and levels of inter/professional knowledge and skills. Social capital theory frames and analyses ‘the social’ and the connectedness or ‘relational’ of the social (Bourdieu, 1986) allowing exploration of the materialities of practitioner relationships across different levels. It offers conceptual and analytical purchase on the relational connectedness within social *networks*, and enables insight on relations of *trust* and the shared *norms* and *values* that *bridge* and *link* practice across macro-level (governance and policy), meso-level (institutional), and micro level (inter-personal) planes (Forbes & McCartney, 2010; McKean et al., 2017).

Social relationships count for everyone and professionals' social capital network relationships, based on shared norms and trust, matter greatly for the children in receipt of co-services. Halpern (2005, p. 10) identifies three basic components of social capital:

*a network*; a cluster of *norms, values and expectancies* that are shared by group members; and *sanctions*, punishments and rewards that help to maintain the norms and network.

In Halpern's model, 'sanctions' imply that negative and controlling factors are operating in social settings. The aim in this paper is, rather, to consider the inverse of sanctions, identifying and understanding *co/productive*, positive, affective interpersonal social capital relations, including trust and related concepts of confidence, regard and reciprocity. Use of the slash (*co/productive*) denotes the relational nature of such productive discourses and practices (Forbes & Watson, 2012).

### **Extending social capital theory: affect and agency**

This paper also foregrounds the role that inter-personal (micro-level) factors play in underpinning and realizing the 'child centred' support network envisaged in policy. This requires examination of *affect*, i.e. study of the social relations that structure emotions, emotions understood as embodied experiences. Following Bourdieusian social capital theory (1986), affective social capital norms are the (mostly unwritten) rules relating to how we feel about our networks: practitioners' affinities, motivations, and commitments, and the temporal relations of attachment which inform action, and thus the production of co-practice (Bourdieu, 1992). Affect structures can be

understood as socially constituted structures ‘driving and underlying agency, infusing and circulating around the space, the person and broader discourses’ (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2013, p.5). Emirbayer & Mische (1998, p.962) conceptualise agency as:

a temporally embedded process of social engagement informed by the past ... but also orientated towards the future (as a ‘projective’ capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and towards the present (as a ‘practical-evaluative’ capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment).

Conceptualising how practitioners’ knowledge and skills are linked with the affective components of social capital (trust, confidence, and respect) in the (re)production of agency, we focus on affect *structures* rather than bodily emotions (Maxwell & Aggleton, 2013). And to interrogate how professionals’ co/practice knowledge, skills and social relations operate, we develop and apply the conceptual frame of connected (social capital)-affective-agency.

### **Productive pedagogy: a social capital-affect-agency frame on co-practice relations**

The social capital (relational) theory and the (past informed, present evaluative, future orientated) agentic frame for analysis described above focuses here on affect relations: how relations between practitioners are structured, shaped and may be characterised. For additional focus on positive practitioner culture, practices and knowledge identifications we use four indicators from the Queensland ‘productive pedagogies’ typology: *connectedness*; *recognition of difference*; *supportive classroom environment*, and *intellectual quality* (Education Queensland, 2001; Mills et al., 2009). These four indicators are applied to interrogate temporally embedded SLCN-network affect-informed agency, i.e. the discourses, decisions, and actions forming

co-productive practice. The analysis recognises that interprofessional practice relationships (professionals' social capital) producing beneficial action for the child, are, in part, an effect of structuring factors, particular social arrangements and processes within a pupil's support setting. The purpose of this analysis, therefore, is to examine the shaping and structuring roles of agency and affect underlying productive inter-practitioner social capital relations (connectedness) for children with SLCN.

The specific questions addressed here are related to a study of primary school children with SLCN where co-professional working was undertaken, the 'Language for All (LfA)' study, fully described in McKean et al. (2017). The questions are:

- *How can the range of productive social capital relations recorded in the study be categorised, analysed, and understood in relation to affect factors?*
- *What insights may be gained on how productive co-professional social capital might be fostered?*

The study site and the research methods are first described, then the analysis presented.

### **The Language for all Study**

LfA was a qualitative case study of SLCN provision in eight schools within one local authority in England and its linked NHS partner. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews with professionals in the support team (listed in Table 1) explored barriers and facilitators for interagency working and relationships; access to support, and

practitioners' perceptions of their own and others' roles. Interviews were transcribed, subjected to thematic analysis using iterative methods, and a thematic framework derived. Further details are published in McKean et al. (2017).

**Table 1 Participant numbers by professional group**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number</b>
Headteacher (HT)	8
Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) <sup>1</sup> -some also classroom teachers)	8
Classroom teacher (CT)	5
Higher level teaching assistant (HLTA)	2
Health Visitor (HV)	2
Speech and Language Therapist (SLT)	4
Educational Psychologist (EP)	2
Language and Communication Teacher (LCT) <sup>2</sup>	2

<sup>1</sup> School staff whose role is to source and co-ordinate extra support or services for a child assessed as having a special educational need. <sup>2</sup> Specialist peripatetic language and communication teachers.

Thematic analysis of the interview data used a framework of social capital concepts (networks, norms, and trust) and its sub-type forms (bonding, bridging, linking) (McKean et al. 2017). The sub-types used in the analyses were:

- *bonding* social capital: the type that binds us together, e.g. the strong bonds we feel with own profession members;



- *bridging* social capital: that which ties us to those less close or familiar to us, but with whom we have looser cross-cutting ties, such as colleagues from other professional groups; and
- *linking* social capital: enacted within hierarchical connections and relationships between people who are not on an equal footing.

These subtypes were considered at three levels:

- *macro*: wider, system-level influences including policy imperatives, funding regimes and laws, often enacted in leadership and governance structures;
- *meso*: practices at the level of the organisation or profession, in this case, school practices; and,
- *micro*: the individual knowledge and skills each practitioner holds or displays.

In summary, the key positive relational themes uncovered in response to the question: *How can the range of social capital relations recorded in the LfA study be categorised, analysed, and understood?* were:

- practitioners' degree of confidence and reliance on one another;
- their degree of bridging and linking with other professionals and at different levels in agencies' hierarchies;
- norms of practice, related to practitioners' ability to contribute their knowledge and context-specific skills at institutional and policy and governance levels.

### **Data analyses in the current study**

Applying a connected-affect-agency analytical frame on interprofessional social capital, this paper examines exemplifications of productive, or *positive*, practitioner

relations articulated in the LfA study data. ‘Productive collaboration’ relations are viewed as positive practitioner discourses and practices of benefit to the child. Positive, supportive practitioner agency is hallmarked by affective structuring conditions characterised and shaped by mutual trust and respect, confidence in the other, joint goal setting, and joint training. This paper seeks to extend the framing of co-productive practices to understand how practitioners’ possibilities for agency are mediated and at times positively re-aligned by supportive affect structures and relations. Any less positive relations revealed in the data will be examined in future studies.

### ***Discourse analysis***

This paper takes a Bourdieusian sociological approach to the question *How can the range of productive social capital relations recorded in the study be categorised, analysed, and understood in relation to affect factors?* Participants’ distinctive discursive positions, dispositions and the practices they generate are examined to understand their agency and its underlying affect (Bourdieu, 1992). The transcribed LfA data corpus was closely read and questioned to understand how and on which ‘orienting’ bases practitioners act and respond in their co-practice. Discourse excerpts illustrating the operation of positive affect relations were selected for analysis. This Bourdieusian theoretical approach is particularly suited to understanding participants’ identifications, affinities, motivations and commitments, and to questioning what is taken for granted in individuals’ talk and actions. Related practices are identified, showing how participants discursively construct their social-spatial relations and construct themselves as co-practitioners. The dominant discourses deployed are

identified and analysed to show how discourses and practices constitute dispositions and positions that produce possibilities for agency and its affective inflections.

## Findings

First we present a summary model of the dominant discourses identified at each level (macro, meso, micro) and then explore in detail micro-level data that elucidates affective-agency relations.

### *Dominant discourses – a summary three-level mapping of main characteristics*

Figure 1 below shows a multi-level mapping of the dominant discourses and practices productive of interprofessional social capital relational practices within the SLCN support network. Numbers indicate individuals’ project numbers: please see Table One above for key to professional titles.

*Figure 1. A multi-level mapping of dominant discourses*

Level	Productive affective interprofessional social capital relations in SLCN support networks
<p><i>Macro-level</i></p> <p><i>policy</i></p> <p><i>governance and leadership</i></p> <p><i>management culture</i></p> <p><i>Social capital sub-types</i></p> <p>bonding, bridging and/or</p>	<p><i>The child with SLCN’s needs prioritised.</i></p> <p><i>Data discourse analysis shows:</i></p> <p>Child support policy placing the needs of the child central to all co-practice contexts is seldom mentioned.</p> <p>Nonetheless, ‘putting the needs of the child at the centre of professionals’ co-practice’ constitutes a core</p>

<p>linking social capital</p>	<p>principle accepted by practitioners.</p> <p>The data repeatedly evidence education-SLT-other agencies' staff bridging to problem-solve, implementing actions and decisions: <i>'all have the child at the forefront of what we are trying to benefit'</i> (HT8); <i>'...have an honest, open conversation about the child that's respectful of the child...'</i> (EP1); <i>'it's about, what's the child's needs...'</i> (LCT1); <i>'...get it to the point where now we know exactly what we've got to work on for that child...'</i> (SENCO); <i>'...a plan for what needed to happen next with that child'</i> (SLT2). Consensus on these known, shared and understood primary governing precepts underpins network co-practice discourses, decisions, and actions.</p>
<p><b>Meso-level</b> <i>school level practices</i></p> <p><b>Social capital sub-types</b> bonding, bridging and/or linking social capital</p>	<p><b><i>Shared understanding of roles and 'doing' co/productive practices.</i></b></p> <p><i>Data discourse analysis shows:</i></p> <p>The stated governing macro-level principles and values of the 'child at the centre' and 'co-practice' function as significant discursive resources deployed by network practitioners.</p> <p>Micro-level inter-practitioner, inter-personal relations also function as accepted institutional (network) meso-level norms of practice.</p>

	<p>Speaking about acting cross-institutionally (meso-level), network members differently mobilise their (micro-level) subject disciplinary knowledge and skills <i>together with</i> macro-level principles at the centre of support network management planning and activities.</p>
<p><b>Micro-level</b></p> <p><i>Individual knowledge and skills (underpinning agency and affect relations):</i></p> <p><b>Social capital sub-types</b></p> <p>inter-/intra-individual bonding, bridging and/or linking social capital</p>	<p><b><i>Shared understanding of and feelings about/doing of distribution of knowledge and skills ‘expertise’.</i></b></p> <p><i>Data discourse analysis shows:</i></p> <p>Regard for the centrality of the needs of the child and confidence that most colleagues have these at heart.</p> <p>When colleagues did not, partners’ concerns were evident.</p> <p>Characteristic of the practitioners’ discourses is the centrality to the network of productive <i>affective</i> relations. Micro-level relations of positive affect included: honesty, feelings of respectfulness towards other network members, responsiveness, openness, personal risk-taking in challenging others, and potential vulnerability. Such affective relations were based on, and demanded, high levels and stocks of interprofessional social capital in the forms of trust, regard, confidence, and reciprocity.</p>

This mapping shows that productive co-practice involves practitioner relations that reflect the principles and values of making the child's needs and aspirations central. Dominant in the discourse is the extent to which SLCN support network members utilise social relations of affect in different combinations in their productive co-practice. Discourses that emphasise the productive nature of interpersonal, interpractitioner micro-level relations of affect are frequently deployed and analysis shows how these social capital relations underpin, and so are imbricated in fostering, strong social capital at other levels.

To further consider this initial finding, and address the question '*How might productive co-professional social capital be fostered?*', selected data excerpts are analysed, illustrating how particular affective social capital relations function.

The ways in which 'productive' social capital is fostered through affective social capital relations emerged as a distinct theme. The data presented illustrate how network members agentially bridge and link successfully in and through discourses, decisions, and actions. The excerpts show how network members 'get on' in social capital terms, relating affectively agentially across professional connections, including bridging to other agencies and linking at different hierarchical levels. This next phase of analysis showed which relationship qualities were manifest at different levels and enacted through bridging, bonding and linking social capital, and were reported by participants as important in co-practice.

These analyses frame agency as a process. Inherent in this process is a sense of present, of being able to draw on the past, and the potential capacity of the future, for

agency in the present moment. The first excerpt demonstrates the importance of habitual past co-practice. The second highlights present-moment connected agency inflected by the past and cognisant of the future. The third illustrates future orientation around a ‘practical working document’ embedded in evaluation of past iterations and present contingencies. Excerpts that follow have authors’ clarifications in square brackets.

***Excerpt One – A higher level teaching assistant discussing a formal planning process for a Year Four child.***

Informed by the past, connected-affective-agency in the present is orientated to future co-work.

*...that child is now having twelve hours of support, we are going through a [formal planning] process for [name] but immediately I said to [the headteacher] “We need to sort this out.” and he’s done...we have re-jigged and it’s sorted, so he takes on board...I never feel as though I am...knocked down, ...flattened or not listened to he takes on board what I have requested...the same with the deputy head...*

*[We] would literally be on the phone and ask, you know, “Well why? What makes you think that?” We’re not a school that will just sit and let something happen like that, happen without having our say put across. [SENCO] is absolutely fantastic at her role, she does it well, and, I mean, I’ve done it a couple of times where I’ve said, “Oh, you know, I don’t maybe agree with that” and, like that case with that child with the [Local Authority Communication Centre]... so we rang and just thought, you know, we’re within our rights to ring and say why and what can we do, they were absolutely brilliant...but we wouldn’t have just left that, because if we’d left it then*

*we wouldn't have progressed to get it to the point where now, we know exactly what we've got to work on with that child...*

Here, the needs of the child with SLCN are prioritised within an enabling team culture and philosophy of inclusion (not deficit). Reflection on past habits informs present inter/professional responsibilities. Affective agentic interaction and communication flow from the network team norm of identification with the principles, values, and practices associated with putting the 'child at centre'. As a result, the HLTA feels '*as though I was being supported*' by their head teacher.

Data repeatedly evidence education-SLT-other services' practitioners bridging to solve problems, agentially and affectively, including as here with self-belief, putting the child's needs at the centre of actions and decisions. The number and variety of examples of practitioners' agency driven by affect was striking, tightly linked to a clear recognition and understanding of a child's needs and a commitment to provide learning that has value and meaning. Temporality is also key. In the above excerpt the HLTA and team share and synthesise their knowledge and understanding of the child and the (in)adequacy of previous provision; interpret the current arrangements; decide; question, and, critically, take responsibility and authority to initiate action. They understand the imperative to act to achieve improved teaching/therapy support for the child. Notably, as in many other instances in the data, affect relations are thoroughly embedded in practitioner agency. The headteacher and their responses can be trusted, and network co-practice norms evidence high levels of reliability, consistency and openness. The SLCN network has clear and productive lines of communication, speaks a shared language, understand their common principles and the basis of their interactions and dialogue. Education staff know that they take 'just'



action (*'we're within our rights'*), socially and responsibly 'truth-telling' on behalf of the child.

The excerpt illustrates practitioner feelings of power and agency, *not* feeling or being 'knocked down, 'flattened' or 'not listened to', nor allowing discontent to build towards resentment, disengagement and inertia. The excerpt shows a practitioner norm of agentic pro-action based on shared practice norms and values and positive affect; high levels of trust and regard of caring and sharing; practitioners 'looking out' for the child, and for each other. It depicts inter/professional agency in the forms of positive engagement and participation in representing the current needs of the child; initiating review, and others' actions in response; having the right knowledge to decide to act, and taking action; and being given authority and legitimacy to act, all to benefit the child. The data repeatedly show how affect initiates and spurs decisions and action; practitioners' agentic co-engagement and questioning; sharing understandings of child language and broader development needs; and pro-actively joining-up their knowledge to identify and co-construct tailored child-centred solutions.

***Excerpt Two – A language and communication Teacher discussing leading a team.***

Present network affective-agency emphasises the practical-evaluative, embedded in past habits and looking to improve future co-practice.

*From the team itself, so the actual language and communication team, I think you know, and I'm the team leader ... but I would hope that we're a very supportive team, and I've certainly tried and it's my firm belief that it's absolutely fine for any one of us, from me as manager to [the learning support a assistant], anybody to say, "I don't*

*know how to do this”, or, “What does this mean?”, or, “Anybody got any idea?”, that kind of very open collaborative working, you know, with, because there should be a fundamental respect that we’re all there for the right reasons, committed professional people who want to improve, and yes, there’s days when, you know, you’re just off your game.... And we support each other through that ... I get support from the other people I work with, so the schools that I go into ... I know them really well and they know me really well, so you can build up that kind of openness and honesty, and I can go to a Head or SENCO in some of my schools and say, “It’s not working really well in there.”, and they’re not threatened by me saying that, they’re not feeling it as a criticism, they’re recognising that, actually, I’m there with them to say, “Right, what can we do?”, and they take that. So there’s that supportive nature, you know, with the individual schools and the staff within those schools.*

Excerpt Two shows current connected-affective-agency norms informed by past iterations and capacity to accept alternative possibilities towards a future that ‘works well’, involving shared understanding of roles, co-practice relations negotiated and distributed, and being flexible across the SLCN support team network. The strength of bridging and linking forms of social capital is shown, underpinning co-practice knowledge and skills relations across agencies at different hierarchical levels. It re-emphasises the centrality of affect, and reciprocal relations of trust, respect and openness regarding practitioners’ lack of knowledge, operating as norms (‘assumed practices’) in the support network. The network has previously built-up, and now draws on, high levels of social capital including the right to act on the fundamental network affective principle of being confident that speaking up and speaking out is worthy of respect, and will be given respect by colleagues, not sanctioned or exploited as a sign of weakness. Indeed, the sense of identity in this network appears to include

the ‘right to seek help or confirmation’. The group evidenced securely-established rich affect relations, so that people do not feel ‘threatened’ or subject to ‘criticism’ when engaging in joint problem solving about what is ‘not working’ and effecting improvements. Team members’ (including the leader’s) practical evaluative interactions and dialogue are reciprocal, ‘open and honest’. Lines of communication are clear, underpinned by collegiality and mutual confidence, seemingly empowering people to take risks, voluntarily to speak their mind, and share for the benefit of the children. People have agency, they actively engage and participate: they co-problem solve, sharing their disciplinary knowledge *and* co-constructing context specific knowledge and understandings to bring about future improvements.

***Excerpt Three – A language and communication teacher discussing creating a co-working document.***

Future orientated agency is contextualised within reflection and evaluation of past habits that have produced a future-orientated ‘practical working document’ towards alternative co-practices.

*I meet up regularly with [Educational Psychologists] with the speech and language therapy service, occupational therapy, [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services]... we’ve got very close links with all of them. Spent quite a while, probably a couple of years ago, working through a framework for our joint working with speech and language therapy services, because, obviously, there can be huge, not overlap, but you know, we’re closely linked. What we wanted to be sure about was avoiding duplication, ensuring that we knew what the unique role of a speech therapist is compared to a specialist teacher, and we had a lot of joint meetings and did a lot of joint work about that, so that we’ve got a framework, we’ve got a*

*document that's a referenced document, and a practical working document about, you know, why would a school involve a speech therapist and us, or which one should they involve first or who do they go to if this is the issue, and so we've got an understanding. There are many occasions when we might both be involved with a pupil, and then we are usually contacting each other to say, "Alright, you know...", and it's not a case of carving up, you know 'Well, you do that and I'll do that', it's about, what's the child's needs, where are the school with it, who should take a lead on this, what should be the focus ... I'm not saying it all works perfectly, new people come into teams and need induction to that, and obviously relationships are very important in who you know, respecting professional skills and expertise of different disciplines, but knowing where yours' fits in with all of that. But we've worked through those sorts of processes a great deal, and will continue to do so, you know, to make it as effective as possible using... the sort of unique skills and roles and responsibilities of different partners, different agencies.*

Support network members here connected actively and *confidently*, networking on their 'expertise' and need to tap into colleagues' expertise based on shared understanding of the distribution of knowledge across the team. Excerpt Three shows how positive social capital relations may occur as a norm of co-practice, with current relations underpinned securely by systems and processes, here collaboratively developing a 'referenced' and 'practical' document' through joint problem-solving and co-construction of meanings, explanations and interpretations, resulting in a mutually agreed 'framework for joint working'. 'New people' are 'necessarily' helped towards understanding what the team network judges to be the context-specific knowledges needed, where trust, respect and mutual confidence in each other's skills and expertise are privileged and used to integrate knowledge from different subject areas into the overall 'fit' for the child at the centre. The confident 'close links' in

current co-practice have been built spatio-temporally, involving here two years of co-efforts, towards a deep shared practical evaluative understanding, grasping the complex relationships in addressing ‘what the child needs’. Practitioners bring their expert subject-disciplinary knowledge and, crucially, their hard-won context-specific practical problem-solving knowledge. This state of connected practitioner co-production of support might be viewed as an ideal of interprofessional collaboration. This network’s optimistic future orientation also shows its projection that working via network support processes will continue, ‘to make it as effective as possible’, and current network engagements using ‘the unique skills and roles and responsibilities of different partners, different agencies’ will continue in future. This co-production of support to children evidences clear, reflective evaluation of past habitual iterations and alterations to focus on present contingencies, centrally ‘what’s the child’s needs, where are the school with it, who should take a lead on this’, and also orientation towards future co-practice arrangements.

### **Discussion: co/productive practices**

Our analysis extended the ‘productive pedagogies’ four-category typology, *connectedness; recognition of difference; supportive classroom* (here, supportive network) *environment* and *intellectual quality* (Mills et al., 2009) to incorporate as ‘co/productive practices’ the SLCN support network’s acceptance, identification with, and use of new forms of affective relational expertise, evident in mutually supportive talk and affective behaviour. Cross-networking, as our analysis has shown, has produced flourishing new versions of professional expertise, reconfiguring mono-disciplinary and mono-professional forms of knowledge and skills. Strikingly,

affective interpersonal communication skills, or ‘soft practices’ (Forbes & Lingard, 2015), emerged as a core co-practice norm and value.

Perhaps surprising was the extent to which co-professional social capital was fostered and amplified in and through practice relations characterised by supportive affective structures, particularly affective social capital related to trust and confidence. Relations highlighting the role of affect were repeatedly temporally embedded in engagement processes, shaping and intensifying practitioners’ enactments of agency. Conversely, it is likely that where practitioners report negative affect, work relations could be problematic or break down.

Practitioners’ specific disciplinary background and prior education position them professionally and confer specific intellectual and social capital resources. Rather than this reinforcing overly bonding forms of social capital and ties to their home professional group, and deterring the bridging and linking relations needed for network practice, data here showed practitioners’ agency to initiate, lead, and negotiate new ‘trans-’ and ‘inter-’ forms of social capital ‘connective tissue’, built-up over time and drawn upon in current networking and future aspirations to co-produce support.

Whilst applying Mills and colleagues’ (2009) productive pedagogies items corresponding to initial themes emerging in the data provided a strong indicative frame, further analysis additionally revealed network practitioners *affectively/agentically* connecting at macro-, meso-, and micro-levels and temporally in co/productive practices. As shown above, such positive affect relations crossed

and built support network identifications. They therefore constitute what we have termed: 'connected-affective-agency'.

### *Messages for managers and practitioners*

This analysis developed a novel hybrid analytical framework of social capital theory together with 'productive interprofessional practices' items, including attention to past-present-future practice co-production, to address the two research questions, making several contributions.

First, our research revealed communicative spaces in which practitioners co-produced knowledge and built and strengthened that network's particular forms of collaboration. Practitioners' understanding and appreciation of the alternative conceptualisations of other disciplines enabled innovative solutions to be found. Practitioners made connections between their own professional disciplinary knowledge and experience and the co-practice skills and competencies they were developing and identifying within the SLCN team. Insights were gained on practitioners' sharing and appreciating others' knowledge and skills, bringing together their intellectual capital via positive affect relations, and restructuring their co-practice domain to the benefit of the child and themselves. We also found such practices further built inter/professional stocks of social capital, including practitioners' sense of their positive agency. They coped with 'problem based practice', where good support for the child presented complex issues and no one 'correct' solution existed, by applying context-specific problem-solving knowledge and strong positive affect relations of trust and professional agency.

Second, insights were gained on what constitutes network spatio-temporalities evidencing shared positive affect relations and social support. Analysis showed the central role of affect in structuring positive social capital relations amongst practitioners, leaders and managers. Practices characterised by lack of a blame culture, trust and confidence in others, knowledge and skills sharing and regard for practitioners from other agencies appeared to be important in shaping cross-network agency. Such positive affective structures underpinned strong bridging and linking cross-team processes, further building ‘connected-affective-agentic’ relations.

Third, analyses contributed insights on respectful recognition of professional difference. The contribution of different professional backgrounds, languages, knowledge bases, skill sets, and cultures is acknowledged, recognised and given due value and respect by the team. Group identity thus operates to build up positive child-centric affective dimensions of social capital. Practitioners explaining network practices, and communicating openly and consistently with each other about network responsibilities, roles and collegial support showed the operation of what we have termed a ‘connected-affective-agentic’ form of professionalism.

## **Conclusion**

The novel social capital and productive agentic affect-mediated relational practices analytical framework, together with a temporalities analysis developed here, provided a new, rich analytical lens on connected-affective-agentic practices amongst professionals that appeared co/productive of better support for the child. Developing the framework to understand co/productive SLCN support has provided a rich shared vocabulary of concepts to apply methodologically to understand the contextual



characteristics shaping other practitioners' connectedness, or any gaps and omissions in their co-working.

A case is made for developing social capital theory, adapting and augmenting its dimensions and indicators, and application in contexts that cut across professional groups and agencies. The analytical purchase gained here suggests that research on child services' co-practice must ask hard questions of all elements in social capital theorisations. Key terms such as 'trust and respect' and 'support' should be extended and amplified, investigating how each is inflected in co-practice agency by affect structures and dispositions. Analysis should focus on the key framing concepts in Bourdieusian social capital theory, but not just the classic conceptual frame of social capital: networks and norms, trust and reciprocity, confidence and regard. Connected-affective-agentic relations in theorisations must be explored, including as we have found, relations characterised by consistency, reliability, care, confidence in other practitioners, and feeling free from threat, criticism, being wary, or scared, or dreading being the subject of group mockery. These are embedded in the investments of expertise, time, will-power and effort and other dimensions of affect that structure, shape and characterise relations between people, and give rise to bodily feelings that motivate or inhibit practitioners' agency in the co-production of support.

Analysis here shows the need for a frame with analytical purchase on current and future networking in children's support services, focusing on co-production and its underlying affective structures and drivers. Broadening indicators of good practice beyond pedagogies towards markers of excellence in co-production of support,

including its mediation by affect relations, should frame and underpin SLCN and broader support settings.

The relationships studied here may be far from typical - schools self-selected to participate in our research, and staff agreed to be interviewed. Replicating the study in other co-practice sites might uncover agentic relationships and affective practices less conducive to child wellbeing, even where staff relationships are good. Our argument for this type of social theory analysis is its strength in uncovering relevant factors in the co-production of good service for children, so enabling productive relational practices to be described, understood and more consistently applied to the benefit of the child at the centre.

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