

**Working Relationally with Networks of Support within Schools:
Supporting Teachers in their Work with Shy Students.**

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Abstract

Childhood shyness and associated psychosocial difficulties can place pupils at risk of underperforming cognitively. Yet shyness is not regarded as a special need demanding a response from education professionals. In this article, drawing on data from a national study of how teachers support shy children, we trace how teachers negotiate this support from the networks of teachers and carers that are available to them. Data comprised post-observation recall interviews, individual interviews and focus groups with teachers, all of whom had successful experiences with shy students. Qualitative responses from a national teacher survey were also analyzed. Analyses were guided by three cultural-historical concepts which explain professional relationships. Four networks were identified: teacher teams; school resource teams; school leadership teams and families. With peers the negotiation was horizontal, drawing on shared concerns with children as learners; with resource teams teachers negotiated upwards by recognizing and addressing the priorities of the resource teams; with leadership teams the school Principals worked relationally and pedagogically with teachers to enable their agentic responses to challenges; while with families teachers worked sensitively to elicit the what mattered for the families and encourage relational collaborations with school professionals. The implications for professional learning and school leadership are discussed.

Introduction

The study reported here is part of a larger mixed methods study of how Norwegian elementary school teachers support students they perceive as shy (henceforth referred to as shy children). Using a cultural-historical lens, we report on the networks of support that classroom teachers draw upon to promote the learning of these students and how they negotiate help from these networks.

A recent report by the Norwegian Work Research Institute argued for using multidisciplinary expertise networks within schools to support teachers (Borg, Fossetøl, & Pålshaugen, 2015). These authors' subsequent research on collaborations within Norwegian schools (Borg & Drange, 2019; Borg & Pålshaugen, 2019) developed this point. They argue for attention to different professional expertise in schools to release time for teachers to actually teach, while not suggesting that classroom teachers should ignore the psychosocial aspects of learning and development (Borg et al., 2015). The availability of necessary expertise, however, can be limited (Borg, Drange, Fossetøl, & Jarning, 2014). Teachers therefore need to be adept at negotiating its deployment.

Mustering resources to support shy children is not helped by how the term shy is used. Among academics there are different interpretations of shyness with some seeing it as a socially constructed and fluid phenomenon (Scott, 2006), while others view it as a relatively stable construct (Coplan & Rubin, 2010). In this study shyness is recognized in part as a temperamental and personality trait, which is characterized by individual differences that vary with regard to wariness and anxiety in the face of social novelty and perceived social evaluation. It can include reticence in social situations, and embarrassment and self-consciousness in situations where people perceive themselves as being socially evaluated (Crozier, 1995; Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). Consequently, shy students are often described as quiet, withdrawn and inhibited. Although these behaviors are not necessarily problematic, some shy students struggle both academically and socially (Hymel, Rowden, & LeMare, 1990; Nilsen, 2018), as research has shown that the intelligence and academic competencies of shy students can be underestimated (Hughes & Coplan, 2010), leaving them at risk of diminished expectations and learning potential.

When, how, and for whom shyness is problematic, has to be seen as an interaction between the subjective experiences of an individual student, and the demands of the context

(Lund, 2016). According to this view, although shyness can be an individual trait, it is also a result of transactional processes over time, including parenting, school environment and relationships with peers. This recognition of environmental factors is also found in emphases on protective factors and transactional processes within psychological research on shyness (Coplan, Baldwin, & Wood, 2020; Crozier, 2020). These emphases on environmental factors allow teachers to identify what they can do to support such students and prevent later difficulties arising.

School inclusion is a central tenet in most educational systems, and is reflected in UNESCO's (1994) Salamanca statement on education for all. In most systems teachers are key to inclusion, making pedagogic adaptations to meet the needs of all students (Buli-Holmberg, Nilsen, & Skogen, 2014; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Nind & Wearmouth, 2006). In an analysis drawing on data from the larger study, Mjelve, Nyborg, Edwards, and Crozier (2019) found that experienced teachers used the concept of shyness as a tool which provided a rationale for how they adapted their pedagogical strategies to the needs of specific children. When discussing how students displayed shyness and why they were shy, the teachers' responses revealed the heterogeneity of this population (Mjelve et al., 2019). In summary, the students were described variously as withdrawn, inward-looking, anxious and with poor self-esteem, requiring teachers to attend to both academic and psychosocial aspects of their learning. Yet while teachers are recognized by school leaders as the 'first responders' to the needs of shy students, their pedagogic adaptations are frequently carried out without help from school policies or clear lines of support once they have identified problems arising from shyness (Solberg, Edwards, & Nyborg, 2020). This lack of guidance could be because shyness falls below the threshold for statutory interventions, despite the potentially detrimental effects of shyness on children's progress (Asendorpf, 2010; Rubin et al., 2009).

In this article we have, in part, taken our lead from the Borg et al. 2015 report on the need for attention to the multidisciplinary networks within schools that can potentially support teachers in their responses to shy students and enable them to focus on pedagogy. In doing so we recognize that different networks in schools can offer different kinds of support for teachers and their students. In order to examine the resources these networks offer and how these resources are accessed by teachers we have employed the concepts of relational expertise, common knowledge and relational agency (Edwards, 2010, 2017). These relational concepts were developed through observing how practitioners created comprehensive accounts of children's trajectories to reveal the extent of their vulnerability and then collaborated in response by each employing their specialist expertise. We suggest that these concepts are relevant, as shyness can be difficult to discern, may express itself differently in different contexts and call for different kinds of expert responses. Hence, it is important to build comprehensive views of these students by drawing on the interpretations of others as well as combining resources by working together to support the child and help them develop as learners. These relational concepts are mainly used in studies to examine collaboration between distinctly different practices, rather than different professionals in one institution. One might expect that professionals within a school will interpret the demands made by specific children in similar ways. However, professionals with different roles and backgrounds will bring different considerations to their analyses of the demands that shy children and their teachers may make on schools and to how to respond to these demands. These different considerations are reflected in the purposes and responsibilities of different networks within schools. Consequently teachers, as first responders to the needs of shy students, need to negotiate the problems they identify into the agenda and purposes of the different networks that might offer them support. It is these negotiations that are the focus of

analyses in the present article. We therefore address the following research questions in relation to shy children:

- (1) What are the networks of support available to teachers, and what do they potentially offer to classroom teachers and their shy students?
- (2) How do teachers negotiate the support that enables them to focus on teaching and helping shy children as learners?

School responses to shyness

Lund (2016) offers a perspective that points to the relational and contextual aspects of school shyness, by discussing shyness as an emotional behavioral problem in the context of school. She provides the following definition of shyness as an internalized problem behavior based on her own empirical work: “Internalized problem behavior is referring to a behavior in which feelings, experiences and thoughts are held and turned inward towards oneself. The expressions that are communicated could be vulnerable, dismissive, depressed, withdrawn, anxiety and insecurity” (Lund, 2012, p. 27, our translation). Importantly, she outlines a vicious circle in which the student challenges the environment by violating expected school behavior, contributes to insecurity and impedes cooperation and open communication. At the same time the behavior makes it challenging for the child or young person to learn and form friendships. Here Lund suggests that shyness, or internalized problem behavior, is not solely within the child, but arises in the encounter with demands and expectations in the context. Lund’s analysis indicates that current expectations of schooling, with their emphases on students’ initiative, cooperation and oral engagement, may increase some shy students’ experiences of anxiety, withdrawal or inhibition.

The cultural-historical line we take is in sympathy with Lund's view. It sees children's development as "inextricably linked with participation in culture and history rather than being dictated by biology" (Lee, 2011, p. 403) and requires us to examine children's development as a dialectic between their individual actions and cultural practices. This perspective offers teachers and school systems an opportunity to enhance their inclusive practices with shy children by making necessary adaptations to cultural practices. We know that some teachers are adept at making such inclusive adaptations in their classrooms (Mjelve et al., 2019; Nyborg, Mjelve, Edwards, & Crozier, 2020) and are able to identify when a shy child needs help (Solberg et al., 2020). However, we know too little about how they negotiate help within their schools. In order to address that gap we start with a classic definition of human networks from Castells (2000):

Social actors constituted as networks add and subtract components, which bring with them into the acting network new values and interests defined in terms of their matrix in the changing social structure. Structures make practices, and practices enact and change structure... (Castells, 2000, p. 697)

This insight into networks suggests that actors with different expertise will enrich the work of networks; but it also prompts questions about how classroom teachers negotiate the expertise distributed across school networks so that shy children are supported in and outside the classroom. By negotiation in this context we mean gaining recognition from others that there is a problem to be tackled and eliciting and responding to the support that they offer in order to address it. It involves knowing what expertise is potentially available and how to release it to enable the inclusion of a shy child in school life.

We have previously discussed how the social teachers, who help children with social and academic issues in Norwegian schools, are key resources for teachers, particularly supporting students outside the classroom (Solberg et al., 2020). Other studies similarly find that they both manage school-level resources, and collaborate with teachers to differentiate provision according to a child's needs (Tissot, 2013). However, how teachers negotiate support with social teachers and other colleagues, drawing on their expertise to enable them as teachers, is less clear. As Stormont, Reinke, and Herman (2011) note; "Often extensive resources exist to meet the emotional and behavioral needs of children; however, there may not be adequate coordination of these resources to support greater utility and subsequent impact on those intended to benefit from them" (Stormont et al., 2011, p. 145), a point echoed by Borg and Drange (2019).

We argue that teachers of shy children need to be alert to both the students' needs and to the potentially available support. Given the heterogeneity of the population of shy children, recognizing the needs of these children can be challenging. Often quiet and withdrawn, their specific requirements may be unrecognized until a fully rounded picture of them in different settings is forthcoming and resources beyond the classroom offered. Here we can begin to see the value of the three relational concepts outlined earlier. We now give more detail.

Relational expertise is the capacity to elicit and respond to how others are interpreting a phenomenon. Here the phenomenon is the vulnerability of a shy child and the demands they make both on their teacher's pedagogy and on a school that aims at inclusion. Deploying relational expertise when working with others leads to an expanded understanding of a child's vulnerability as well as making available the resources to respond to this expanded interpretation. This collaborative response to the expanded interpretation is what Edwards terms *relational agency* (Edwards, 2005). Key to relational agency is an understanding of the

motives and values that shape the different contributing practices and their specialist expertise.

Exercising relational expertise and contributing to relational agency involve being explicit about what matters to you as a professional, revealing your professional motives, i.e. commitments, and being able to align your motives with those of others. Professions are stronger when they work together, ... [and] quite explicitly enact their values and commitments. (Edwards, 2015, pp. 783-784)

For example, a classroom teacher might focus on enhancing a student's oral participation in lessons; whereas the social teacher might focus on the child's participation in play during recess. Here we come to the third relational concept: *common knowledge*, which consists of the motives or what matters to each professional. It is common knowledge, knowledge of what matters to each other, which mediates enriched interpretations of a problem and ways of responding to it. Attention therefore needs to be paid to building common knowledge to enable the flexible responsiveness of networks in schools. The building process involves recognizing the same long-term goals, revealing specific motives and values through discussions, and listening to and engaging with others' motives (Edwards, 2010, 2017). We suggest that these three relational concepts offer analytic tools, which can reveal how expertise is negotiated horizontally within networks and vertically as teachers take their concerns through the hierarchies of the networks of potential support available to them.

Building common knowledge requires practitioners to be explicit about what matters for them and about their specific expertise. This explicitness surfaces the expertise available; while mutual respect for what matters in each expert practice mediates the collaboration that Borg et al. (2015) suggest is lacking. In the present study we identified why and how

classroom teachers negotiate the expertise that is potentially available to them to provide safety nets for shy children and to enable them in their work with shy children as learners.

Methods

The present study is part of a larger national study designed and conducted as a sequential mixed method study. This process is reflected in the sub-study we now describe.

Sampling and sample characteristics

There are five sources of data from two samples of teachers. Sample A comprised a purposive sample (Patton, 2002) of 19 classroom teachers who were recognized as having successful experience with shy students and therefore likely to be able to articulate their approaches (table 1 is adapted from Mjelve et al., 2019, p. 7, with the added pseudonyms of the teachers). These teachers were recommended by people the project team trusted as highly competent professionals, such as the Educational Psychological Counseling Service (EPCS), higher education colleagues who worked with teachers and elementary school principals. They were selected from different rural and city elementary schools in different Norwegian regions. They were interviewed about strategies they employed to support shy students (Mjelve et al., 2019). Sample B, was not a purposive sample of teachers with success with shy children. Participants were recruited from the public list of schools between 2017 and 2019. The total number of respondents was: 329 teachers from 303 Norwegian state schools. The schools ranged in size, were located in both rural and urban districts and included students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.

Ethical approval was given by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, and informed consent from participants was ensured during the first meetings.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Methods and measures

Sample A (n = 19) provided four sets of data, the first two sets were gathered by the third and fourth author and the third and fourth sets were gathered by the first author. The first set comprises *post-observation recall interviews* (Dempsey, 2010) with teachers who had experience of working successfully with shy students (n = 8). In the recall interviews, videoed classroom observations of a specified shy child were used to stimulate the teacher to reflect upon the strategies used with the child (Mjelve et al., 2019). The second set are data from 11 similarly experienced elementary school teachers from different schools and in different elementary grades in three *focus group interviews*. As with the recall interviews, these interviews elicited strategies teachers deployed individually or with the support of others. Teachers were asked to elaborate on how they were supported in carrying out their strategies. For example, some collaborated closely with the school nurse on shy children's social skills, while others discussed their observations of the child and potential strategies with teachers in their grade teams. The third data set from this sample involved three teachers from the pool of 19 who were selected to expand on the resources they needed and gathered in their work with shy students (They are indicated by bold typeface in Table 1). The three teachers were selected because the larger study revealed that their school leadership teams were particularly involved in supporting teachers of shy students. The previous interview transcripts were used to inform the interview guide in this data collection process elicit more detail on what support they received with shy students. In addition to the teacher interviews a purposive sample of the leadership teams from the three schools (n = 10 school leaders) was also interviewed and while analyses of their responses are reported more extensively elsewhere (Solberg et al., 2020) we do draw on an interview with a Principal in the present paper. The fourth set of data

comprised concluding *group conversations* between the teachers and the leadership team within the three schools. The aim of this conversation was to conduct member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000), aiming to both add to and clarify the data from the individual interviews. Combined, the interview data consists of 19 hours of recorded material. The material was transcribed verbatim, and whole or parts of the transcripts were translated from Norwegian to English.

The survey (Sample B) was directly informed by the qualitative work carried out with Sample A. The aim of the national questionnaire was to elicit the extent that the strategies, resources and support that were identified from the qualitative material were utilized by elementary school teachers in Norway. The questionnaire contained a total of 74 items grouped in five sections (a: child's characteristics, b: teacher's strategies, c: your classroom, d: change, e: your school), and one open-ended response question. Based on interview data from 19 participating teachers (data set A) and ten school leaders (Solberg et al., 2020), 11 items were specifically constructed to assess teachers' perceived support, both requested and received, from their school leadership in their work with shy students. The items were designed by the research team after identifying common patterns about how and why support was requested across the whole data set. One item relates to whether shy students are responded to by teachers without involving others. Four items relate to why teachers bring a shy student to the attention of school leadership teams, e.g. high anxiety, academic impairment, withdrawn behavior or other problems. Four items captured school level responses to the needs of shy students, such as allocating additional resources, and two items identified to whom teachers turn for help; e.g. immediate teacher colleagues or senior leadership.

For each item teachers were asked to rate on a 3-point scale to what extent they perceived support for the particular student they had in mind. The rating options were: (a)

“Usually” (b), “Sometimes”, (c) “Never”. In addition each item had a “Don’t know” response option. Additionally, teachers had the opportunity to answer an open-ended question in which they were asked to elaborate “If other types/needs for support, please describe”. The responses to the open-ended question are discussed in the present paper. 54 of the 329 teachers responded to the open-ended question and 33 of the responses were deemed relevant, i.e. directly related to resources, and not an elaboration of a specific strategy.

Analysis

Combining data sets allowed triangulation, with different sources addressing the same research questions. We first identified the resources that were most prominent across the material. The first author carefully read the material, as a phase of familiarization, to gain an overview of the available networks. NVivo 12 was used to categorize the responses, producing four networks that were evident across the transcripts in some degree; (i) Teacher grade teams/colleagues (ii) The schools resource teams (iii) Leadership teams (iv) Families.

The first author then used the relational concepts as sensitizing concepts (Patton, 2002) to interrogate the data and examine “how the concept is manifest and given meaning in a particular setting or among a particular group of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 456). This included listening to the audio-recordings and reading the transcripts multiple times, searching for evidence of the relational concepts in use; while NVivo 12 was used to note thoughts relating to the concepts and the research questions. Table 2 displays how examples from the transcripts were read and interpreted. When selecting extracts for the presentation of the findings, we identified those that captured most clearly how teachers negotiated expertise in the networks. While we employed the three relational concepts as sensitizing concepts, which would offer us some analytic distance, we were also at pains to do justice to the messages in the data and also recognized how concepts themselves may become refashioned

in use (Edwards, 2017). In order to counteract potential theoretical bias and allow for surprising findings to surface, the team regularly discussed on-going analyses.

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The 33 relevant responses from sample B produced four categories (i) Within school professionals (ii) Outside school professionals (iii) Other resources (e.g. literature) (iv) No specific resources. Table 3 exemplifies this categorization, as well as examples from the responses written by teachers. Table 3 reflects a range of responses, as some teachers wrote one-sentence replies; whereas others elaborated to a greater extent. The numbers refer to the number of times e.g. the school nurse was mentioned by different teachers. As the survey was sometimes completed by teachers without experience with shy children, these data provided a broader view of how teachers perceived within school resources and were used to complement the interview data.

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Although the findings are not generalizable to the population of teachers, we suggest that insights from teachers who have been effective in meeting the needs of shy students' may usefully inform interventions directed at supporting these students and their teachers. Our focus has been on explaining how local expertise can be recognized and released to support shy children, who are at risk of detrimental school outcomes. Following Maxwell in his comments on theoretical validity (Maxwell, 1992, p. 291), our claim to validity is based in how the conceptual tools we use in the analytic process give us distance and allow us to

explain and not simply describe teachers' actions, so that they might be understood and replicated by other teachers and schools.

Findings

As we have already indicated, earlier analyses have revealed the specific pedagogic demands experienced by teachers in their work with shy students within classrooms and how the teachers responded (Mjelve et al., 2019; Nyborg et al., 2020). In brief, these analyses revealed how teachers enable shy children's participation in the flow of classroom life and how they orient themselves towards the psychosocial demands made by the child with, for example, strategies to reduce their classroom anxiety. Elsewhere we have also pointed to the key role of social teachers in support for vulnerable shy children outside the classroom (Solberg et al., 2020). The present study adds to these findings by revealing how teachers negotiate additional expertise from others to help them in their responses to shy children. The findings are organized to address the two research questions by examining each network in turn.

Teacher Networks

These networks primarily comprising teacher peers could operate both formally in grade teams, and informally in for example hallway conversations, and were mentioned by most of the teachers in sample A as important first-ports-of-call. Negotiations began with discussion and gathering more information about the child. The common knowledge that was built in these conversations was the start of expanding teachers' understandings of the child, the issues to be worked on and how they might be tackled, drawing on the observations and experience of colleagues, as voiced by Mia, a fifth grade teacher:

Yes, (...) that it is room to discuss things [internalized behavior] you need to discuss seen from your own perspective (...). I have a need to discuss the student because I am a bit uncertain regarding how to approach her because it took such a long period of time for me to get to know her.

Teacher teams allowed information sharing on how to “see” the children, and to create awareness of them between colleagues. Victoria explained “this type of student disappears”, a view that was echoed by Lillian who said these students “don’t make any fuss of themselves”. Mia similarly stated:

... two students have been discussed because these are children that disappear a bit. Especially if we have substitute teachers (...) they totally disappear. We have [therefore] discussed that it is important pay special attention to these children.

Students’ potential invisibility, was recognized as a danger by these teachers with sound experience of supporting shy students. Susan, a seventh grade teacher noted: “we must remind ourselves not to forget”, a view shared by Chloe who argued that teachers need “to keep [these students] in the back of one’s mind”. Andrew and Chloe respectively went further to reveal how conversations with colleagues could not only render the child visible, but also enrich their understandings of the student:

(...) if you observe that he has been sad or that he has left the classroom because something has been unpleasant; then we talk about it (...).

(...) we often discuss our individual students when we have a need for information, or share our experiences, whether it concerns behavior or the home situation (...).

Not all the teachers, however, used the teacher network to negotiate support for shy students, as Zoe, a second grade teacher explained after being asked if she pays any extra attention to children with introverted behavior in teachers' team discussions:

No, in fact never. We talk about individual students, but mostly the ones that are a bit loud.

They get noticed the most, and that's why I think this project is very exciting, because you can easily forget those who sit quietly and do everything they're asked (...).

The creation of common knowledge in relation to shy children teacher teams was, therefore, not evident everywhere, reinforcing the comments about the importance of creating awareness among colleagues.

Teacher networks were also places where additional expertise could be formally requested for shy children when help could not be provided through building common knowledge with immediate colleagues. In several schools, the social teacher or a member of the leadership team would attend grade meetings. The social teacher might offer immediate support, or the child would be referred to the resource team for further consideration.

In summary, teacher team networks offered teachers the opportunity to raise initial concerns, identify their needs as a teacher and expand their interpretations of the shy child. The over-riding tenor of these discussions was an openness where gaps in expertise could be revealed safely and the experience and expertise of peers accessed in secure and trusting relationships. In comparison with the other three networks there was little evidence of a power hierarchy affecting how expertise was negotiated. Instead, understandings and expertise were negotiated horizontally with mutual support.

*School Resource Teams*¹

These networks potentially comprise members of the leadership team, the social teacher, special needs educators, school nurse and milieu (environment) therapist and external agencies such as EPCS, speech therapists, children and youth psychiatric services and social services. They are more formal than the teacher teams and mainly discuss the reported concerns of teachers. The teachers are not regular participants; but are invited to discuss referred students and indicate what matters for them while the common knowledge that expands understandings of the child is built.

Concerns that were referred to these networks were problems that could not be addressed through the pedagogic expertise to be found in the teacher teams or that needed a whole-school decision. They included school absence, school refusal, selective mutism, or support with social skills. As Sandra explained: “Sometimes you just need help because it is too difficult, we can't handle it, and then we need to get help”. Sylvia, another teacher in the same focus group related her need for help to the severity of shy students’ problems:

They range from quiet and shy to full of fear and carrying terrible baggage. It is a very wide range and consequently very different actions and strategies are called for depending on where we are on that range.

¹ In Norwegian elementary schools one teacher is the class teacher, usually following the same class for several years. As well as having teachers who support classroom teachers by focusing on the special needs education of students, each school also has a social teacher who follows up teachers’ concerns about students’ social or academic development, contact with parents, cooperating with leadership, and contact with external agencies. There are also deans who liaise between principals and classroom teachers. Schools link with external agencies, in particular, the ECPS. Other external agencies include speech therapists, psychiatry services, and child welfare (social) services. All of these specialist support roles can be represented in a resource team.

This heterogeneity of student shyness meant that building common knowledge between teachers and resource team needed to be a joint endeavor with the team paying close attention to a teacher's concerns.

Of course much could depend on the extent to which teachers' interpretations of the problem had the same status as the interpretations of the other professionals in the resource team meetings. In the data sets within Sample A there was evidence that teacher concerns were taken seriously in the meetings; but limited resources meant that teachers needed to be adept at working within the priorities of the resource team when negotiating help, and they were not always successful, as Cassandra explains:

(...) In order to sign up anything in the resource team you have to provide them with several measures first. And then it becomes a bit 'yes okay' but I signed up [this student] to the resource team to know what measures to take. And then you get stuck sort of (...).

Teachers could also find that the expertise available was not appropriate and common knowledge impossible to build. Mia explained how she referred a student to the EPCS, but found that the line of responsibility was not clear:

Yes, I have referred her [the student] to the Educational Psychological Counseling Service. They are a bit uncertain whether it is their domain. I don't know exactly whose domain she is, because it does not seem like she fits the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service either (...). She [the student] has been in contact with the school nurse and has received counseling from her (...) in order for her to get a bit more engaged.

But examples of such problems were rare in the Sample A data. The data sets comprised teachers in schools, which generally enabled their work with shy students. Sample B could present a different picture of relational work to support shy children.

(...) I do not think the school focuses on this [internalized behavior], except for selective mutism or something that leads to weird behavior. Then it kind of gets visible to the social teacher (...).

It is a lot easier to get help if it is talk of specific and documented learning difficulties in Norwegian or mathematics.

The resource team is therefore a potential resource for teachers concerned about shy children. However, the team's thresholds and priorities could prevent teachers from negotiating their concerns about shy children into their meetings. To be successful teachers needed to negotiate upwards by ensuring that how they presented concerns met with what mattered for the resource teams and what is available for them. Doing so involved teachers in building common knowledge by reflecting teams' priorities and then using that common knowledge to negotiate support.

Resource team responses to these concerns were largely located outside the classroom and included setting up small groups where social skills could be developed and one-to-one support through, for example, individual counselling sessions with shy students. Mjelve et al. (2019) identified the prevalence of teachers' concerns with shy children's psychosocial needs and questioned teachers' capacity to address them within the classroom. The present study found that the involvement of members of the resource team could be one way of filling this gap.

Here we saw the exercise of relational agency, where the specialist expertise of resource team members was deployed alongside the pedagogic expertise of classroom teachers to address an expanded understanding of the shy student and their needs. Their expertise and ability to work outside the confines of the classroom meant they could, according to Olivia “follow up more closely than we [the teachers] do otherwise”.

Here is just one example of collaboration between a classroom teacher and a social teacher. The classroom teacher, Cassandra, was concerned about a student who spent recess alone, looking sad. The student, however, said that they preferred being alone. The teacher discussed the student’s preference for spending time alone during break time as a dilemma for her as the teacher. The teacher explained her subsequent collaboration with the social teacher to address both her insecurities over what the child’s behavior meant, and how to respond to it:

(...) we sort of have to try to map out, what the student’s needs are and how the student really is (...). The aim was really to first and foremost to build a relation between the social teacher and this student. So that they in a way had someone else to rely on than me (...). The student saw me and the social teacher cooperating and then it became easier for me to relate to the student too.

Cassandra explained how the process, resulting in the shared responsibility of relational agency, had enhanced her work with the child:

(...) Yes it has first and foremost been advice and support. And then there has been... A bit weird to call it assistance maybe but (...). I have received help to try to get the student to have more safe adults around them so that I am not the only one with the responsibility sort of.

The need for shared responsibility was noted by several teachers who observed that helping shy students is not always something to tackle alone. Audrey, for example, had arranged for a group to spend time with the school nurse once a week in order to create a safe set of friends for her shy student. She explained; “It’s not just putting them in a room together, hoping for the best. You need to sort of help them for real”. While additional expert support for the unfolding of relational agency was valued it was not always easily available. Amelia commented: “I think it would be helpful to have people with different educational backgrounds in school (...) who have competence relating to these kinds of things rather than me”. While several teachers pointed to limited resources for shy students. Hannah’s comment was typical; “so many [resources] are locked to the formal special needs provision decisions”.

In summary, resource team networks could offer teachers and students extended and intensified support. But first they needed to recognize shy behaviors as potentially problematic and therefore within their remit. Much could, therefore, depend on whether resource teams exercised relational expertise, exploring teachers’ concerns with them in order to build common knowledge. This process was particularly important given the heterogeneity of shyness. Teachers therefore needed to be adept at articulating their concerns in ways that might match the priorities of the resource teams. When successful, the outcome could be the productive sharing of responsibilities and unfolding of relational agency in support of the child.

Leadership Team Networks

Members of a leadership team can include the Principal, assistant principal(s), deans and social teachers, depending on the size of the school, and distribution of responsibility. Some members were often available in all of the school-based networks, however, in teachers’ negotiations with leadership teams we see most clearly how power plays into the building and

use of common knowledge to help the vulnerable shy child. With teacher teams the teacher of a shy child would initiate the building of common knowledge and encourage expansion of interpretations of the child's behavior. When drawing directly on the expertise embedded within leadership teams, teachers depended on whether and how school leaders created the opportunities for such discussions and used them to empower the responses of the teacher. Building common knowledge to enhance the capabilities of the classroom teacher with a shy child therefore called for sensitivity on the part of the leader.

This work was important because involvement of school leaders could signal a severe problem such as school refusal or persistent absenteeism. Here one Principal explains how she did not take part in the whole process of helping a student about whom the teacher was concerned, but how she facilitated the teacher in seeing what to do, and whom to contact:

(...) A teacher contacted me about a student who is very quiet. And then we talked about 'you need to find out what has happened to that student' (...). That was the activity; to converse with the teacher to really get at her experience of the situation, and then converse with the student. Then the student and teacher had a conversation, and then we took it to Child Psychiatric Services to see if there were any trauma that needed to be processed.

Here we can see how the Principal elicited what mattered for the classroom teacher, the teacher's motives for requesting help. She also brought into play her own understandings of the locally available resources and made what mattered for her, involving external specialists, explicit for the teacher. She was expanding the concerns of the teacher, labelling them in ways that matched what local services could offer and using the common knowledge that was so built to mediate the teacher's interactions with the psychiatric service. In this way we can see that school leaders can be key actors in pedagogically facilitating the building of common knowledge with junior colleagues.

They also could co-create and communicate shared visions of how to regard all students, and how to be a professional pedagogue. In doing so they were building common knowledge through school policies. The intention was that this common knowledge would mediate teachers' interactions with students, parents and each other. This finding was unsurprisingly most prominent in the in-depth interviews with school leaders and the three teachers who discussed how they were supported by their schools (Sample A, third data set). Nevertheless, leadership role was implicitly visible in other data sets. For example, one Sample B teacher wrote: "My school encourages personal characteristics, including introversion".

In the following discussion between a Principal and Cassandra we see how a school leader negotiated common knowledge, by being explicit about her beliefs about diversity, while also acknowledging Cassandra's concerns about the demands of a transition to high school for her shy student.

Principal: "(...) But there has to be room for differences and everyone does not have to be extroverted if they are basically introverted (...). But it can be an inhibition right? We have to see how we can create an arena so that it is permissible to be like that without being marginalized (...)"

Cassandra: "(...) Because it is like you said that they do not have to be extroverted in a way, but it can also inhibit their learning after a while and now they are getting closer to upper junior high school too and they will then have to switch classes" –

Principal: "Yes they have to dare to raise their voice. It is a few of those things that they need to practice".

Cassandra: "Yes, right. Dare to have a presentation and talk calmly".

Accepting differences and allowing for student diversity mattered to this Principal. On the other hand, the teacher saw the need to prepare the student for the academic demands of future schooling and the Principal took seriously what mattered for the teacher. In doing so the Principal was relationally mediating school values, while enabling the teacher's agentic responses to the shy child and what they saw as the individual needs of the child.

In summary, members of leadership teams found they needed to work pedagogically with junior colleagues in order to ensure that the resources they could suggest were the best match for the needs of a child and the teacher understood their implications. This approach also required teachers to be clear about their interpretations of the child's difficulties, while being alert to what the school leaders were able to suggest. While this is not a new finding, labelling the negotiating process of articulating and listening as building common knowledge allows us to identify how the knowledge is built, what is built and how it is deployed.

Family Networks

The data revealed the importance of working with family members and carers in order to expand understandings of shy children, their strengths and needs in different contexts, to share school aims for the child and enlist family support for them.

Building common knowledge of what mattered for the child and family was valued by teachers as it could reduce students' school anxiety. For example, one teacher allowed a student to choose where she sat in the classroom, after her mother reported her daughter was anxious about random seating. In the process of exploring what was important at home and school, teachers could also discover anxieties that were masked in school but surfaced at home. Here Andrew discusses a child: "(...) Often he would hold back [in school]. We didn't see too much here, but at home it was a bit of frustration". In another example of sharing knowledge of what motivates a child Ava, recounted:

We want to know if this is a behavior that is just displayed in the school or if those at home are also worried (...). We received a lot of support from the parents and a lot of tips (...). Because they tell me what she [the student] does at home. She had no-one to visit. Then the parents tell me that she likes to play with dolls, but she thinks it is embarrassing because nobody else does that. So it is an opportunity to find out if anyone else plays with dolls (...).

However, mentioning internalized behavior could be a sensitive matter, requiring relational expertise on the part of the teacher. In particular, building common knowledge entailed revealing their own interpretations of a child, whilst being welcoming to hearing the interpretations and experiences of family members. Thus, for some teachers, it was not just a question of what to say, but how to say it. Here we see how Leah and Liam respectively, built common knowledge relationally with parents.

In my opinion it has to do with finding balance, because if we solely focus on the kid being silent, the introverted behavior, in the communication with the parents, less space is available for everything else. The child is more than just silence.

(...) it is of great significance how I choose to present it, that I want this to improve because it will benefit your child later. How can we succeed together? Then we have gotten a lot further, compared to if I only state that this is a problem.

These careful negotiations could also lead to relational agency, where teacher and family members worked together to help the child, with their actions mediated by the common knowledge they had built. This could involve joint planning thus opening up possibilities for actions that were both conducted at home, and within the classroom, Sylvia explains:

(...) that you sort of work together towards the same goal and tell them that it creates a safe atmosphere around the child (...). It's not just only me or only you, we work together towards the same goals (...). For instance daring to speak up in the classroom, or daring to give a short presentation, practice at home and that she, for instance can try giving a short presentation, maybe a bit shorter than the other students (...).

This shared responsibility enabled teachers to teach, in the knowledge that home was supporting school. Thus, family networks of support offered teachers enhanced knowledge of shy children, as well as relational support for their efforts at including the student in school and classroom life. Such exercise of relational agency, however, called for careful relational expertise where teachers needed to overcome any family expectations of official vertical hierarchies, in order to work horizontally recognizing parents as experts on their own children.

Discussion of the Findings

Our starting point was the need to pay attention to the expertise available to teachers in inclusive schools to allow them to focus on teaching (Borg & Drange, 2019; Borg et al., 2015). Taking the concept of networks of potential support within schools as a way of exploring how that expertise was deployed, we examined what four networks of expertise could potentially offer teachers and their shy students, and analyzed how teachers negotiated the potential support.

The analyses revealed an ascending order of what the different networks could offer teachers; ranging from initial concerns that might be addressed during informal discussions and pooling expertise among peers, through to explicitly labelling concerns so that they meet the thresholds and priorities of the more formal resource teams and on to drawing on

leadership teams' expertise in recognizing the severity of problems and indicating pathways of external support. By also eliciting accounts of working with families, we can see what an important resource they are in expanding understandings of shy children, clarifying teachers' grasp of how to work with the child and providing relational support for the inclusion of shy students.

These different networks also called for different ways of negotiating, which we label by drawing on Edwards' work on relational collaborations (Edwards, 2010, 2017). In summarizing the findings, we suggest that classroom teachers' negotiations with colleagues can be seen as horizontal: the exercise of relational expertise and building common knowledge by sharing interpretations and ideas on possible responses. The negotiations here begin the process of making visible children whose difficulties could be overlooked. The common knowledge that was built could lead to immediate support from a social teacher, or agreement that the concern should be forwarded to the resource team for more formal recognition and response. In negotiating with resource teams, teachers were faced with building common knowledge vertically (Edwards, 2010; Edwards & Stamou, 2017), by presenting what mattered for them in ways that matched what mattered for the members of the resource teams, such as selective mutism or school refusal. If they were successful the outcome could be an unfolding of relational agency as teachers collaborated with other practitioners such as social teachers, in ways that allowed them to focus on being a classroom teacher (Borg et al., 2015). If a problem required the involvement of leadership teams, one could again see a vertical building of common knowledge, this time orchestrated by school leaders, which could lead to relational agency and a strengthening of a teachers' own expertise. Negotiations with families were led by the teachers, who recognized that building common knowledge demanded relational expertise, but that the relational agency between teacher and family that could be an outcome was of considerable benefit to the child. The

negotiations with each type of network revealed them as offering different forms of safety net for both the shy child and their class teacher.

We have employed the cultural-historical emphasis on learning and development as outcomes of a dialectic between individual and cultural practices relatively lightly, preferring to focus on how these views are reflected in the emphases that both Lund (2012, 2016) and Scott (2006) place on how shyness arises in interactions, in this case between learners and school practices. These views are also evident among others who have taken a primarily trait-based view of shyness (Coplan et al., 2020; Crozier, 2020) and offer teachers a way of seeing how their actions can assist shy children and ensure they are included in the flow of classroom and school life.

In focusing on how teachers can negotiate additional help in this endeavor we employed three concepts that are cultural-historical in origin, in order to move beyond descriptions of actions to explain their purposes when deployed to advance the conditions in which shy children may learn and develop. In doing so we have pointed to the relational expertise often easily found in horizontal networks, but which needs to be worked on by participants facing vertically positioned networks if they are to build common knowledge. We have also emphasized that such common knowledge can mediate the unfolding of relational agency in support of a shy child, whether it is the teacher with the social teacher, ECPS or the family. The heterogeneity of shyness lends support to our contention that attention needs to be paid to the observations, concerns and motives of those who can offer insights into a child's shyness and that is perhaps not enough to simply seek labels that may or may not fit the type of withdrawn behavior being manifested. In brief, these relational skills are worth highlighting.

Our use of the term networks (Castells, 2000) was also important in the analysis as we needed to acknowledge the fluidity and over-lapping of these connections, while also

recognizing that different actors have different responsibilities and expertise and different ways of participating. The concept of networks therefore allowed us to follow the path opened up by Borg et al. (2015) when they discussed the multidisciplinary networks within schools and their under-use. However, the responsibilities of different actors in meeting the needs of shy students and their teachers can require clarification: our informants have indicated that shyness may present as a dilemma, and areas of responsibility may not be clear cut.

Additionally, by employing the relational concepts alongside the idea of networks, we have also addressed the concern of Borg and colleagues that teachers should not separate the psychosocial from the pedagogic but may need help with addressing the former. Being able to label such collaborations as the unfolding relational agency, mediated by common knowledge does, we suggest, allow a greater emphasis on focusing on the whole child.

Our analyses also show that the role of school leaders is key, both in taking seriously how shyness might impede student progress, and in ensuring that there are spaces for discussions where common knowledge in relation to shy children can be built and where it can lead to actions that allow teachers to focus on teaching. When we know that resources within schools are limited (Borg et al., 2014), having school leaders who facilitate teachers' access to the expertise of others, is, we suggest, a good way of ensuring awareness of available resources (Stormont et al., 2011), and better coordination and utilization of these resources (Borg & Drange, 2019).

In the analyses our focus has been work with shy children. However, we would encourage a reading which connects our findings with other challenges faced by classroom teachers in schools where student diversity and inclusion are embraced alongside high accountability and often diminishing resources. Understanding how access to resources is negotiated, while developing understandings of the complexity of the problems that diversity

among students may present would, we suggest, assist in ensuring that children's needs are met.

Potential Implications

We now reflect on the contribution of the study to cultural-historical accounts of collaboration. The three relational concepts were developed (Edwards, 2005, 2010, 2017) to clarify what is involved in inter-professional or multi-disciplinary collaborations. The intention was that the concepts might inform professional development programs aimed at collaboration across institutional practices (Edwards, 2017). The present study is, to our knowledge, the first to examine the relevance of the concepts to negotiations and collaborations within bounded institutions where one might expect homogeneity of interpretation and response. It therefore makes an important contribution to the refining of these concepts by employing them to examine interactions between actors who are largely located within the same institution and with broadly the same professional backgrounds yet positioned in different places within organizational hierarchies. The negotiation of interpretations of children and of assistance with them up hierarchies also usefully augments understandings of how the concepts can be deployed. They have been used to explain how knowledge is negotiated up systems (Edwards, 2010; Edwards & Stamou, 2017), but this is the first time they have been employed to examine how they are used to negotiate assistance.

There are also implications here for teacher induction and professional development programs. As we have already indicated, our analyses have revealed four ways in which teachers in this study negotiated the expertise of others. Each approach involved them in positioning themselves differently in order to build the common knowledge necessary to take forward their intentions as teachers and find support for those shy children who showed signs of vulnerability. We would suggest that developing relational expertise and building common

knowledge as a prerequisite for the unfolding of relational agency are attributes that are of benefit to the profession and the learners they guide.

But above all there are implications for school leadership that aims at inclusive education. Societal expectations of teachers are high and, as Mjelve et al. (2019) have shown, shy students can require teachers to work beyond their competence levels in dealing with the psychosocial problems they experience. Given the risk of current shyness impacting on later performance, we suggest that teachers need systemic support and it is the responsibility of school leaders to provide the conditions for such support. However, it is not enough to simply provide arenas for discussion and pathways for upward referrals of students' difficulties, attention needs to be paid to how the knowledge that is distributed across potential networks of support is made visible and accessible, and how the expertise and intentions of classroom teachers and families are given appropriate status to enable relational responses to the demands presented by shy children.

Limitations and Future Directions

We acknowledge limitations to the study. One is that a different set of conceptual tools might have revealed different forms of engagement with the expertise available. Another is that the data set is relatively small and we recognize that we cannot generalize from it. Nevertheless, this qualitative study is informing a larger scale national survey. Importantly, we did not observe any regular meetings, but relied on interviews where they were reported. We do, however, have extensive data from school leadership teams within the same schools as teachers from data sets 3 and 4, that are largely reported elsewhere (Solberg et al., 2020). This lack of observational data encourages us to consider future research using observations of different network meetings to develop our understanding of relational expertise in action. Additionally, it would be useful to know how different participants in the resource teams

contributed to common knowledge and how that common knowledge played into actions that may have enabled teachers to focus on teaching. Our focus on shy children may also be seen as a limitation. However, we do not regard it a serious limitation as they may typify those students who may be vulnerable learners at risk of accumulating disadvantage as they move through school, but whose difficulties fall below the threshold for statutory interventions.

More generally, we need research on how we support teachers and schools in their endeavors to create environments that allow for individual differences, while simultaneously recognizing the potential needs among vulnerable children. Helping teachers manage the tension between academic tasks and their role as caregivers remains an important research aim. As Victoria puts it:

I can't stop myself. I just need to post a political thought here. Because if we hear what we have to tell now, on how we accommodate, we must hope and believe that the Norwegian school welcomes this type of teaching in the future and then, that not everything is standardized and formalized, because then this group of students loses their opportunity to exist.

This means that to support teachers supporting shy students, we must acknowledge the conditions that teachers work within, and understand the contextual demands of schooling, for both students and their teachers, while developing teachers who are not only able, but also enabled in their relational work with potentially vulnerable students.

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Individual interviews (N=8 teachers)		Focus groups (3 groups, N=11 teachers) Teachers and years of experience (y)
Female/male teachers, grade	Experience	<p><i>Group 1, 4 teachers:</i> Matthew, 10 + y; Carl, 0-5 y; Victoria, 10+ y; Ava, 5-10 y</p> <p><i>Group 2, 4 teachers:</i> Sandra, 5-10 y; Sylvia, 5-10 y; Lillian, 10+ y; Audrey, 10+ y</p> <p><i>Group 3, 3 teachers:</i> Leah, 10+ y; Liam, 10+ y; Olivia, 10+ y</p>
Hannah, grade 6	10+ y	
Mia, grade 5	5-10 y	
Susan, grade 7	5-10 y	
Amelia, grade 6	10 + y	
Zoe, grade 2	0-5 y	
Andrew, grade 7	10 + y	
Chloe, grade 6	10 + y	
Cassandra, grade 5	0-5 y	

Table 1. The participants

Network	Sensitizing concept	Example from the transcripts	Annotations
Teacher networks	Common knowledge	<p>Interviewer: “Has the student been discussed [in teacher teams]?”</p> <p>Chloe: “Not that I can come to think of (...). We have discussed the importance of her [the student] getting positive feedback in relation to what she is doing in order for her to take more initiative to join in, building her self-image or her self-esteem (...). We have discussed that it is important that those who are in the classroom see her in particular”.</p>	Creating awareness as a pathway to creating common knowledge, and potentially enabling other teachers involved with the student in psychosocial agentic work.
Leadership team networks	(Implicit) common knowledge and teacher agency	<p>Interviewer: “How about the school administration? Have they initiated putting students like these on the agenda? (...) The quiet children (...)”.</p> <p>Andrew: “Yes, I have been talking about next year, and I have come to mention the quiet ones, but it’s not like we need to follow any administrative arrangements. Which class they are going to be assigned to and stuff. I have made list with some names that I know, like [name of a student] and like [name of a student]. They feel safe when they get to go in the same class as two or three they are okay with (...). Walking into the classroom with someone that makes it [switching schools] a bit less scary. So I have thought of that (...). We have discussed this with the school administration, but we haven’t discussed that kind of problems [shyness/internalized behavior] so to say (...). It’s hard, because it’s not a very noticeable problem. It’s not a problem that involves everyone. It’s more of a problem that only involves those children, and unfortunately, it gets forgotten if you function and get done what you need to in terms of school work and such (...).</p>	The teacher displays agency in making practical arrangements for the “quiet” children by making the administration aware of students who will benefit from continuing together in the same class in a new school. However, the common knowledge does not seem to be explicitly created with regards to why these practical arrangements are particularly important for the shy students.
Family network	Common knowledge between families and teachers	<p>Leah: “I (...) have an open dialogue with the parents (...). Often they [the students] act in an opposite manner at home. That they are good at expressing themselves, being open, and in that way we can turn to the parents and ask them ‘what are they telling you at home, what are they saying’ (...).”.</p>	Teacher accessing parents’ understandings of the child through open dialogue in which the teacher also tells parents

			about child at school.
Resource team network	Relational agency	Audrey: “(...) we established a group that went to see the school nurse once a week or something, and there they spoke a lot about them taking care of each other (...). But it calls for resources. It’s not just putting them in a room together, hoping for the best, you need to sort of help them for real (...)”.	The teacher and the school nurse worked together on the long-term goal of social skills – here the nurse brings her expertise to bear in a group they both established.

Table 2. Analysis using sensitizing concepts

Within school professionals	External agencies	Other resources	No specific resources
<p>School nurse (5)</p> <p>“We are closely cooperating with the social teacher and the school nurse”.</p> <p>Teacher teams/colleagues (3)</p> <p>“Does not always get discussed with the school leadership, but often in the [teacher] team. The team decides if we should take it further to the school leadership”.</p> <p>“What we as a school do is to discuss between colleagues. Educational Psychological Counseling Services does not have the resources to help us with other than academic difficulties”.</p> <p>School leadership teams (3)</p> <p>“For me, at my school, the most important part of the work is the daily work within class. My student has improved so much that there is no longer need for specific follow up. The</p>	<p>Educational Psychological Counseling Services (4)</p> <p>“My understanding is that Educational Psychological Counseling Services in [name of municipality] has asked to receive fewer registrations due to lack of capacity and that the schools to a greater extent should arrange for students without registering a student with internalized behavior (...)”.</p>	<p>Literature (1)</p> <p>“I read some literature for myself, but I do not manage to transfer the ideas into the hectic everyday life at school”.</p> <p>Parents (5)</p> <p>“Extra close school home cooperation (...)”.</p>	<p>“Up to the individual teacher”.</p> <p>“The school does not have any routines on this, it is up to the individual teacher to find out what they want. In my experience, these students do not get a good enough offer, since the resources often go to the students who are externalizing and aggressive. This may complicate the task of adapting well enough for the students who are quiet”.</p>

leadership team at my school supports me, and I could have received more help/courses if I wanted”.			
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Table 3. Examples of survey response categorization