Associations Between Problem Framing and Teacher Agency in School-Based Workgroup Discussions of Problems of Practice

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Abstract

We explore how problem framing shapes teacher dialogue in teacher-led, school-based peer consultations. Twenty audio-recorded workgroup conversations were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. Three different frames for presenting problems of practice were identified: teaching-, student- and classroom composition-oriented. Quantitative analyses showed associations between problem frames and the ensuing positioning of teachers as main agentive actors. In-depth qualitative analysis of two focal cases of low-teacher-agency problem frames (student- and classroom composition-oriented) revealed that psychologized discourses and attribution of responsibility to parents contributed to reduction of teacher responsibility and concomitant limited agency, and that initial problem frames were resistant to reframing.

Associations Between Problem Framing and Teacher Agency in School-Based

Workgroup Discussions of Problems of Practice

There is growing interest in teacher learning through participation in teacher-led, school-based professional learning communities (e.g., Curry, 2008; Havnes, 2009; Horn et al., 2017; Lefstein et al., 2020b; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Slavit et al., 2013), and specifically engagement in collaborative analysis of problems of practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Ghousseini & Sleep, 2011; Horn & Little, 2010; Lefstein & Snell, 2014; Little, 2003; Zhang et al., 2010). However, naturalistic studies of peer-led dialogue in school-based teacher workgroups show that collaborative inquiry into dilemmas of everyday practice does not happen spontaneously (Lefstein et al., 2020b). Participating teachers tend to avoid sharing difficulties and dilemmas they encounter during classroom instruction, preferring rather to focus on success stories (Segal, 2019) or to share best practice tips (Little,1990; Horn, Kane & Garner, 2017). In addition, the descriptions of practice that teachers provide in their discussions are often insufficiently detailed to enable meaningful, in-depth inquiry into the complexity of classroom practice (Brasel et al., 2016; Lefstein et al., 2020a; Little,1990; Nelson et al., 2012).

To address these existing tendencies, and in order to facilitate more productive, inquiry-oriented engagement that provides meaningful learning opportunities, several types of structured teacher team activities have been suggested (e.g., Borko et al., 2014; Brantlinger et al., 2011; Conca et al., 2004; Puchner & Taylor, 2006; Segal et al., 2018). One of these is *collaborative peer consultation*, in which a participating teacher consults with the team about a specific, pre-prepared problem of his/her practice. The consulting teacher provides an elaborated description of the relevant details, and team members are invited to explore possible causes of the problem and discuss potential solutions (Segal et al., 2018). In principle, peer consultation activities thus address the two aforementioned barriers to productive teacher collaborative inquiry by directly addressing problems of practice, as well as by providing detailed representations of classroom practice (Lefstein et al., 2020a; Segal et al., 2018).

However, findings from a recent quasi-experimental study comparing different workgroup activities (i.e., video-analysis, collaborative planning and peer consultations) showed that the potential of peer consultation activities to support productive inquiry into practice is oftentimes not fully realized (Babichenko et al., 2020). That is even though teachers in this study were collaboratively engaged and actively participated in peer

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consultations, these were characterized by low indexes on both inquiry-related measures, such as disagreement, and content-related measures, such as focus on pedagogical issues. Detailed quantitative dialogue analysis showed that in comparison with other team activities, peer consultation conversations rarely focused on teacher actions and teacher agency. That is, when teachers consulted with one another regarding their own problems of practice, they rarely positioned themselves as agentive actors in resolving these problems.

In the present study, we explore what might account for these disappointing and somewhat surprising findings. Following previous research (Bannister, 2015; Benford & Snow, 2000; Coburn, 2006), we focus specifically on the role of problem framing in teacher conversations. In the following sections, we describe how professional agency (i.e., teachers' perception of capability and responsibility in the face of a particular problem) is constructed in teacher professional discourse in school-based workgroups, and review the literature on problem framing in teacher professional discourse.

How Teacher Agency is Constructed Through and in Professional Discourse

Teacher professional agency is defined as teachers' perception of themselves as responsible for and capable of making independent professional choices and acting according to their own values, beliefs and knowledge (e.g., Toom et al., 2015; Turnbull, 2005). Teacher professional agency is not a fixed, individual disposition, but is rather situational and socially constructed (e.g., Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Emirbyer & Mische, 1998; Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011). Teacher professional discourse in the workplace is a key site for co-construction and formation of teacher agency and for negotiation and development of shared norms about its boundaries. In other words, through interaction with their peers, teachers construct their understandings about spheres of action in which they are expected to act and take responsibility, and about areas in which their agency is perceived as limited (Horn & Kane, 2015).

In the field of teacher discourse in and for professional development, attention to teacher actions and the detailed description of these actions are often presented as a defining feature of productive teacher professional conversations (Horn & Kane, 2015; Horn & Little, 2010; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Little, 2002). What characterizes dialogues that position teachers as actionable agents and what kind of moves position them as having no actionable response? First attempts to integrate and connect the notion of teacher agency with existing conceptualizations and thinking about productive pedagogical discourse have recently been made (Babichenko et al., 2017): According to this operational framework, conversations that

include frequent references to teacher actions (to what teachers do, did, can or should do) position teachers as agentive actors who are capable and responsible to choose a course of action and act to resolve the problem. In contrast, when attention to teacher actions is absent from the discussion (i.e., teachers neither describe how they tried to deal with the issue addressed, nor query each other about it or propose possible courses of teacher action), this would signal a lack of teacher agency in the context of the issue addressed.

We acknowledge that a more expansive approach to teacher agency could include agentive roles for teachers in shaping not just their work with students, but also within the broader context (including with agents such as parents, administrators and policymakers). However, there are many external, structural and systemic issues that impact teaching and learning, yet are usually out of the teacher's direct control (e.g., poverty, family life) or arena of expertise (e.g., medical and paramedical interventions). For this reason, we have chosen to adopt an approach to teacher agency that focuses on what is directly actionable by teachers.

In the current work, we explore the interactional mechanisms involved in the diminished agency teachers attribute to themselves in the context of peer consultation activities. We focus specifically on problem framing, since several studies have shown that the ways in which participants interpret their role and responsibility in problem resolution is affected by the way the problem is framed (Bannister, 2015; Coburn, 2006; Horn et al., 2015).

Framing and Re-framing of Problems of Practice

Problem framing in conversations refers to the ways in which participants collectively define, describe and interpret a problem, what aspects of the problem are highlighted and attended to in conversations, and which are deemphasized and concealed (Bannister, 2015; Benford & Snow, 2000; Coburn, 2006). In the literature on problem framing, two primary types of framing emerge, *diagnostic* and *prognostic* (Benford & Snow, 2000; Bannister, 2015). *Diagnostic framing* refers to determining the problem's nature, identifying its causes, and attributing blame. *Prognostic framing*, on the other hand, involves participants proposing solutions to the diagnosed problem and specifying what needs to be done.

Empirical research has shown that in conversations, the way participants collectively frame the problem's nature and cause (diagnostic framing) determines to a large extent the type of solutions that are put forward and the way participants interpret their role and responsibility in problem resolution (prognostic framing) (Bannister, 2015; Coburn, 2006; Horn et al., 2015). Problem frames within conversations are not necessarily fixed, however; they may be actively negotiated. Alternative ways to define and interpret the problem can be

offered by different team members and problems are frequently re-framed over the course of a conversation (Coburn, 2006; Vedder Weiss et al., 2018).

In the present work, we build on this existing empirical and theoretical knowledge and expand it in two ways: First, whereas previous work has predominantly focused on conversations about struggling students (Bannister, 2015; Coburn, 2006), we do not commit to a particular topic of teacher conversation and consider all pedagogical problems of practice teachers chose to discuss in their workgroup conversations. Second, when determining the diagnostic framing of an issue, scholars tend to consider both the way in which the nature of the problem is defined, and to whom responsibility is attributed. We argue, however, that they can and should be considered separately: Defining the nature of the problem (or its locus) does not necessarily determine who is responsible for resolving it. In this study, we explore how initial diagnostic framing of the nature of the problem (from here on: *initial framing*) shapes the diagnostic framing of blame/responsibility attribution.

The Present Study

The aim of this study is to better understand the interactional processes that characterize collaborative peer consultations led by local leading teachers in in-school teacher workgroup meetings. More specifically, we focus on the interactional norms and routines associated with different problem framings and their consequences for agency attribution.

We seek to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: In collaborative peer consultations during teacher workgroup meetings, how do the consulting teachers frame the pedagogical problems of practice they present to the group?

RQ2: What are the associations between the different problem frames identified in RQ1 and references to teacher agency in the ensuing workgroup dialogues?

RQ3: What interactional processes are involved in the co-construction of diminished teacher agency in peer consultations?

The data for this study were collected within the context of a reform initiative aiming to support peer-led, autonomous, school-based teacher professional learning communities in two Israeli school districts. From a larger data set of audio-recorded workgroup meetings that included a range of different team activities, twenty peer consultation activities by twenty different workgroups were randomly selected. A sequential explanatory mixed methods approach was adopted (Cresswell et al., 2003; Ivankova et al., 2006). This mixed methods design entails collecting quantitative and then qualitative data in two consecutive phases within a study. While the quantitative data provides a broader picture of the targeted

phenomena, the qualitative data analysis helps explain the quantitative results. The results of the quantitative phase also inform the data selection in the second phase.

The current study thus consists of two phases: In the first phase, we aimed to uncover general, recurring patterns in the association between initial problem framing and teacher agency attribution, across the 20 peer-consultation cases. To do so, we first identified the various ways in which the consulting teachers initially frame their problems of practice using an inductive approach and then systematically categorized the initial problem framing of the entire corpus (RQ 1). We then examined the association between these initial problem framings and attention to teacher actions in the ensuing dialogues, using a quantitative approach (RQ 2). These quantitative findings were used to select two focal cases for further in-depth exploration of the interactional processes involved in co-construction of limited teacher agency. In this second phase of the study, we draw upon linguistic ethnographic concepts and methods (RQ 3).

Methods

General Data Collection Procedures and Overall Setting

The study was conducted in the context of a reform initiative aiming to support collaborative inquiry into problems of practice in teacher workgroup meetings in two Israeli school districts. The main professional development effort was focused on leading teachers (LTs), who coordinated, planned and facilitated weekly or bi-weekly in-school workgroup meetings. LTs met bi-weekly in $3hr$ long, multi-disciplinary, off-campus professional development meetings, in which they were encouraged to (a) focus their workgroup meetings on problems of practice of interest to team members; (b) use detailed representations of practice, such as video recordings or detailed case descriptions, to make practice available for collaborative inquiry; and (c) use conversational protocols for specific workgroup activities (a series of pre-defined reflective stages and associated questions, Segal et al., 2018; McDonald, 2003) to structure inquiry and cultivate productive discursive norms. During the professional development meetings, LTs were introduced to these principles and tools, experienced them together, and reflected together on their experiences leading in-school workgroup meetings.

One of the workgroup activities to which LTs were introduced was collaborative peer consultation. In this activity, a selected member of the workgroup pre-prepares a detailed case from his/her own practice, about a problem or dilemma with which he/she is struggling. The consulting teacher's preparation usually consisted of writing up a detailed case description, which was presented by her to the team. A protocol to support teacher dialogue

in peer consultation activities was introduced to the LTs during the PD and was included in a handbook provided to the LTs at the beginning of the year. The main stages of the protocol included: presentation of the case and definition of the problem, analyzing possible causes for the problem, and suggesting possible courses of action (see Appendix A for the full protocol).

Data collection took place during two school years (2015-2017). A total of 150 teams participated in the reform initiative during this period. After taking into consideration logistical constraints (scheduling and travel), as well as language constraints (only the 110 Hebrew-speaking teams were considered for this study), invitations to participate in the study were issued to 78 teams. Sixty teams from 34 different (predominantly elementary) schools voluntarily agreed to have a researcher attend and audio-record a subset of their meetings. The teams were assembled by discipline, grade level or other principle, according to local school-based decisions. A total of 205 meetings (60-90 *min* each) were audio-recorded from these 60 teams, and formed the main data set for this study from which a specific set of meetings was selected for further analysis.

Constructing and Preparing the Data Set for Fine-grained Analyses

Identifying Peer Consultations in the Main Data Set

Two members of the research team independently listened to the entire data set of 205 workgroup meetings to identify peer consultation activities. Any disagreement was negotiated until joint agreement was obtained. The beginning of a peer consultation activity was identified by an explicit invitation by the LT to the designated team member to introduce the pre-prepared case from his/her practice for peer consultation (e.g. "Anat will introduce an issue that's bothering her and we will help her find ways to deal with it, to think about it, to find solutions…"). The peer consultation activity ended when the LT explicitly initiated a different activity (e.g., "Now let's talk about the exam that will take place next week") or adjourned the meeting. Thirty-six peer-consultation activities, from 23 different elementary teams, were identified in the 205 audio-recorded workgroups meetings.

One peer consultation case per workgroup, the first to appear chronologically in the corpus, was transcribed in full (23 cases in total). In three cases, the activity was not audio-recorded in full, due to technical or operational failures. These cases were removed from the current study's data set, yielding a final data base of 20 peer consultation cases of 17 to 58 *min* long (*M* = 42 *min*). Teacher teams were organized by discipline, grade level, or specific theme (e.g., improving school climate) (see Appendix B for a detailed table).

Choosing Pedagogically Focused Peer Consultation Cases

The consulting teachers were free to choose the topical content of the problem of practice they prepared for the consultation. Variation in the choice of topics for consultation was thus expected, with different topics having more or less potential to stimulate conversations that include frequent references to teacher agency. In order to create a coherent data set of comparable cases on topics that could potentially precipitate pedagogically oriented conversations and focus on teachers as primary agents, we focused our analysis on consultations that were explicitly introduced as concerned with pedagogy.

We then mapped the topics of the problems of practice, as introduced by the consulting teachers. The first author listened to the way consulting teachers introduced the problems of practice (introductions ranged between 100-850 words) and identified the aspect of practice to which the consulting teacher alluded.

This initial analysis indicated that 16 out of 20 consultation cases were introduced as dealing with classroom instruction, classroom management, or student learning. These 16 peer consultation conversations form the focal data set for the fine-grained analysis. In the remaining four consultation cases (which were not included in the focal data set), the main issues were either teacher-parent interactions (three cases), or the teacher's personal ability to regulate her emotions (one case). Appendix B contains brief descriptions of the 20 problems of practice, as introduced by consulting teachers.

Phase 1. Uncovering general, Recurrent Patterns: A Quantitative Focus

In the first phase, we focused on RQ 1 and 2 and explored how consulting teachers frame the locus of the problem in their initial introduction (i.e., initial problem framing), and how this shapes agency attribution in the ensuing workgroup dialogues (i.e., who is positioned as responsible for and capable of resolving the problem).

Step 1: Coding Peer Consultation Presentations for Initial Problem Framing

To identify the various ways in which consulting teachers initially frame their problems of practice, the first author worked inductively from the data, repeatedly reading the consulting teachers' presentations of the problems of practice, with a special focus on the following interpretive questions: (a)Where does the consulting teacher locate the problem? (b) What aspects of the problem are emphasized and elaborated in the presentation and what aspects are left more obscure?; and (c) How does the consulting teacher formulate his/her request to the team? What kind of advice does s/he seek?

After identifying qualitatively different ways in which consulting teachers framed instructional problems, a coding scheme for systematic categorization of initial problem framing was developed (see Appendix C for coding scheme details), containing three

different types of problem framing: teaching-oriented, specific student-oriented and classroom composition-oriented. This scheme was applied to the corpus of 16 instructional problem presentations.

Step 2: Assessing Whether Teachers are Positioned as Agentive Actors in the Ensuing Dialogue

To explore the association between initial problem framing during the consultation presentation, on the one hand, and the positioning of teachers as agentive actors in the ensuing workgroup conversations, on the other, we compared the extent to which the ensuing dialogues were focused on teacher actions following each of the three different peer consultation problem framings. To code for teacher positioning as agentive agents, we used the Collaborative Inquiry into Practice (CLIP) procedure for coding teacher workgroup dialogue (Babichenko et al., 2020). The 16 peer consultation activities were first segmented into dialogue units. The segmentation strategy combined time-based and topical boundaries, yielding units relatively homogenous in length (around 1 *min* long), but also self-contained and topically coherent (for more details see Babichenko et al., 2020). The average number of dialogue units per conversation was 30.93 (total of 434 units).

To assess whether teachers were positioned as agentive actors in workgroup dialogue, each dialogue unit was coded for the CLIP variable *focus on teacher actions* (Babichenko et al., 2020). It is a dichotomous variable, indicating whether the conversation in a dialogue unit is (or is not) focused on teacher actions, that is when it includes at least two references to what teachers did, do or should do in a professional context. The CLIP definition of *focus on teacher actions* is relatively more inclusive than common conceptions of "teaching" (e.g., Bae et al., 2016; Borko et al., 2014; Sherin & van Es, 2009): (a) it includes references to actions carried out in the past or present as well as suggestions of possible or recommended future actions, and is therefore not limited to a certain time period; (b) it is not limited to the speaker's own actions, but rather may be assigned to other teachers, or to teachers in general (e.g., "In my daughter's school, they use this textbook only for the third grade"); (c) it is not limited to physical actions but includes also teachers' mental actions (e.g., "I tried to see her in a different way"); and (d) it is not limited to teacher-student interaction, but includes any action carried out by teachers in the context of their profession (e.g., interaction with parents and other school personnel).

Step 3: Identifying the Agentive Actors in Consultations Associated With Low Teacher Agency

To identify the actors positioned as responsible for (and capable of) solving the problems introduced in peer consultations, we worked inductively from the data. We read and listened to the conversations closely, multiple times, holding the following interpretive question in our mind: To whom do the speakers attribute, implicitly or explicitly, capability and responsibility for resolving the problem discussed? This qualitative analysis yielded a clear set of actors associated with each problem frame. Then, to confirm our qualitative observations more systematically, we compared the frequency with which these actors were referred to in the context of different problem frames by coding each dialogue unit in the analyzed peer consultation cases for reference to these actors.

Phase 2. In-depth Micro-analysis of Two Focal Cases

Building on the findings from phase 1, we delved more deeply into peer consultation conversations in which limited agency was attributed to teachers and other actors were positioned as responsible for and capable of solving the problem. We aimed to explore the underlying rationales and assumptions associated with unproductive problem framings as identified in phase 1 and how these were co-constructed in the course of the conversation (RQ3). To do so, we first carefully analyzed and annotated the unfolding of the dialogue in those cases characterized by unproductive initial problem framings (based on the systematic coding in phase 1). We paid particular attention to ways in which participants understood, defined and re-defined the problem, and assumptions about its nature, as reflected in the conversation.

We then selected two illustrative focal cases, one representing each un-productive framing type. The cases were selected because they were representative of the discourse associated with each type of problem framing in two respects: First, both cases were characterized by relatively low focus on teacher actions and relatively high focus on other agents. Second, they were illustrative of the recurrent discourse patterns we uncovered during the initial analysis. They also function as *extreme cases* in that they exhibit the highest concentrations of the relevant observed phenomena – references to parents and to school resource allocation – and therefore have the potential to "activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied" and to "clarify the deeper causes behind" the phenomena explored (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 78).

The analysis draws upon linguistic ethnographic concepts and methods (Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015; Snell & Lefstein, 2013). Specifically, we repeatedly listened to the recorded focal episodes, worked from detailed transcripts, and used micro-analytic methods to analyze the sequential unfolding of the events. Such analysis involves proceeding slowly

through the recording, asking at each line, "What is the speaker doing?" "Why that, now?" "How does this turn at talk respond to what came before?" "What else might have been done here but wasn't?" etc. (Rampton, 2006). We paid close attention to ways in which problem frames shifted, or problems were *reframed*, and the ways these re-framings shaped and reflected the agency attributed to teachers.

Findings

Phase 1. Uncovering General, Recurrent Patterns

Different Ways to Frame Pedagogically Focused Problems of Practice

Consulting teachers described the instructional problems they encountered in their classrooms using three qualitatively different problem frames: specific student-oriented, teaching-oriented, and classroom composition-oriented (see Appendix C for details). The first type, *specific student–oriented* problem framing, locates the problem with a specific student, describing his/her difficulties as the essence of the problem. This problem frame was almost always communicated by the consulting teacher from the outset, opening with the following phrase: "I have a student who…". This type of problem framing characterized 5 out of 16 cases (29%) and is exemplified in the following quote:

> "I have a student who is very cute and nice and he feels that he knows and he can and that he is able. And he does everything very fast and fills in all the assignments, and everything is very neat… But when I check his work everything is wrong…This is the case"

In *teaching-oriented* problem framing, the consulting teacher emphasizes her own teaching practices as the problem about which she wishes to consult. This type of problem framing characterized another 5 cases (29%):

> "I have a group of eight students, with whom I work twice a week in a small group context to advance their reading skills. I usually give them a second-grade level text. I put on the table word cards from the text and each student takes a word card…[The teacher gives more details about the way she usually works with the group] I am not sure this the right way to work with them and that this actually helps them to overcome their difficulty… I want to consult with you about dividing them into two groups… and also how to take more advantage of that hour, because I don't really feel that I get to all of them, to all of what they are, to their needs"

A third type, the *classroom composition-oriented* problem framing, locates the problem in the challenging composition of a specific classroom. The framing is usually communicated

through a statement such as "I have a very difficult class", followed by a detailed description of the high proportion of students with various difficulties. This characterized 4 cases (24%) and is illustrated in the following quote:

> "I have difficulty teaching the fourth grade. This group is energetic, with disciplinary problems and concentration difficulties. There are three special education students, another three students are diagnosed with ADHD. Only half of the classroom reads… It is very difficult to teach English in this classroom. I am worried about the level of knowledge they will have toward the end of the 5th grade and the nation-wide tests in English [then]. What can I do to improve their reading level and to deal with the disciplinary issues in this classroom?"

This categorization system enabled classification of 14 out of 16 (87.5%) pedagogical problems introduced by teachers in our sample. Two additional cases could not be specified as clearly representing any of the three categories, since they did not locate the problem neither with a specific student or classroom composition, nor with teaching (cases 6 and 9, Appendix B), and were not analyzed further.

Associations Between Initial Problem Framing and the Positioning of Teachers as Agentive Actors

Systematic analysis of the conversations revealed the following pattern of association between the initial framing of problems of practice and the focus on teacher actions in the ensuing workgroup discussion (see Table 1): When the presenting teacher framed the problem as an issue of teaching, the ensuing conversation was overall focused on teacher actions (62% of dialogue units). These scores are relatively high, both compared to the specific student-oriented peer consultation cases (46% of units) and the classroom composition-oriented cases (38% of units). It is also higher than the 57% average scores of teacher dialogue in the other two workgroup activities, video analyses and pedagogical planning, that were analyzed in Babichenko et al. (2017).

<center>- Insert Table 1 About Here –</center>

To Whom is Agency Attributed in Consultations With Low Teacher Agency?

Within the nine workgroup conversations following the two problem frames associated with low teacher agency, two distinctly different types of agentive actors could be discerned, each associated with a specific problem framing type: Workgroup dialogues that followed specific student problem frames tended to include lengthy discussions of the student's

parents, locating them as the primary agentive actors. When peer consultation activities were framed as problems of classroom composition, however, they often seemed to trigger a focus on administrative issues, specifically personnel and time allocation in schools.

These observations led to a systematic coding of all 14 cases, with a focus on references to (a) parents; and (b) "the school" (as an organization) or to particular school personnel other than the work group members (i.e., other teachers in school, school counselor, school psychologist). The findings are presented in Table 2 and corroborate the qualitative impressions: In teacher workgroup conversations following a student-oriented problem framing, parents were mentioned in more than half of the dialogue units (57%). In comparison, parents were mentioned in only 18% and 19% of the dialogue units of conversations following classroom composition or teaching problem framings, respectively. Similarly, when the initial problem of practice was framed in terms of classroom composition, teacher conversations included references to other school personnel relatively frequently (43%), in contrast to conversations following student-oriented (22%) and teaching-oriented problem framing (16%).

-Insert Table 2 About Here-

Phase 2. In-depth Micro-Analysis of Two Focal Cases

In this part of the analysis, we aimed to understand the logics and interactional mechanisms underlying the drift away from teachers as agentive actors in the student-oriented and classroom-oriented framings. That is, we aimed to identify underlying assumptions about the problem, its nature and its sources (i.e., the initial framing) communicated by the various participants and the interactional processes involved in co-construction of diminished teacher agency.

We focused specifically on the first part of the consultations, from the end of the consulting teacher's presentation of the problem until the moment that parents (in the specific-student oriented framing case) or other school personnel (in the classroom composition-oriented case) were explicitly introduced into the dialogue as those responsible for resolving the problem. In these excerpts, we searched for moments in which the consulting teachers or other team members negotiated or elaborated on the diagnostic framing of the problem.

Focal Case Analysis 1: Teacher Dialogue Following Student-oriented Problem of Practice Framing

The 42 *min* long peer consultation took place in a primary school team. A 5th grade homeroom teacher consulted about a problem of practice set in one of her language arts lessons.

We chose this specific case for its high focus on the student's parents (parents were referred to in 71% of the units in this case), as well as for its ostensibly pedagogical initial framing of the consultation case.

Consulting Teacher's Introduction: From Pedagogical Framing to Therapeutic Reframing. The consultation began with a relatively long introduction of the problem by the consulting teacher, Rachel (7 *min*), which was comprised of several clearly distinguishable parts. In the first part of the introduction, Rachel described an instructional event that she found disturbing.

RACHEL:	Today a student approached me after we studied persuasive writing for a month. The student approaches me and says: "Rachel, I don't know how to write a persuasive paragraph". A month of work, a month of work, drafts, three to four drafts per student that I check and give them back, countless times that I remark and we move forward and so on. And then a student approaches me and says something like that. I was shocked. [In the following 80 *sec* she provides a detailed description of the activities the persuasive writing unit entailed] Yesterday, I collected their notebooks to check them and he didn't hand his in. I told him I wanted to talk to him and that's what he told me.

Here, an event that is clearly pedagogical is described as the locus of the problem (a student who admits he doesn't know how to write a persuasive paragraph). The problem introduction, up to this moment, doesn't include any explicit reference to the diagnostic framing of the problem. However, the detailed description of Rachel's pedagogical actions and her emphasis on her investment in teaching persuasive writing communicate that her teaching is not the source of the problem. Rachel continues her introduction, providing some background about the student.

RACHEL:	So, a bit of background about the child. We will call him Lior, OK? He's a very slow student, very, very slow. If you let him, he'll work on a test for five hours. Very anxious. He is diagnosed, but he doesn't have a psycho-didactic or didactic diagnosis, only a psychiatric one. He's diagnosed with an attention disorder and he was treated with some type of medication until a month ago. After we told the parents that he isn't getting better and he even looks more anxious and a bit

	apathetic, they went back to the psychiatrist. It also took some time, but they approached the psychiatrist and changed the medication. But still I don't see any improvement, rather even a decline in his functioning. In general, he looks lost, he isn't able to meet the expectations of a 5th grader. I'll add also that his father suffers from PTSD, maybe there's also something environmental.

This part of the problem presentation seems intended to provide the team with information about the student that will help them understand the instructional event. However, without clear congruency with the instructional challenge described earlier as the locus of the problem, Rachel describes the student's difficulties using predominantly psychopathological terminology (e.g., anxiety, attention disorder, PTSD, medication). The nature of the problems is reframed from pedagogical to psychological. The abundance of different psychological diagnostic labels in this short description also communicates a certain level of confusion and a sense of lack of expertise, which is more explicitly asserted in Rachel's concluding words:

RACHEL:	I don't know, he isn't diagnosed. In the end, we don't have a diagnosis that provides us with enough information. In general, I feel lost. I don't have any idea how, without a diagnosis, without having the professional knowledge about the source of his difficulties Is this anxiety? Are these learning disabilities? I am really lost and I feel that I don't know how to help him.

Rachel again relies on psychological and psycho-diagnostic concepts. She also expresses her perceived lack of competence in diagnosing, understanding and helping students with such difficulties, explicitly and repeatedly. Her sense of powerlessness is reflected in repeated statements of "I don't know" and "I have no idea", and her lack of "professional knowledge". She thus directs attention toward external solutions, diagnostic and therapeutic procedures and tools that are not part of a teacher's pedagogical repertoire or within their sphere of action.

Rachel's Colleagues Probe the Problem: Negotiating the Problem Frame. In alignment with the peer consultation activity protocol, Rachel's introduction is followed by questions posed by team members.

SARAH:	You started by saying that you kind of begin from the end, that he approached you yesterday and said that he doesn't understand anything, and you were surprised. On the other hand, when you described him and his difficulties, so kind of my question is, kind of, why are you surprised?
YASMIN:	What did surprise you?
SARAH:	Why did it surprise you? And a second question is whether during this month or so that you were working on the topic, didn't you feel that he was losing track, that he didn't understand the process

Sarah and Yasmin highlight the incongruence between the pedagogical and the psychological problem framings, asking Rachel to resolve it. By asking Rachel about what happened during the instructional process ("during this month or so that you were working on the topic"), Sarah also suggests focusing on the pedagogical framing of the problem, attributing Rachel a degree of responsibility for the student's failure. However, when asked to re-formulate her request to the team, Rachel responds:

| RACHEL: | It seems to me that my question is: How can I help such a kid when I feel that I have neither the tools, nor the information? |

In her (re)framing of the problem, Rachel asserts the student's state and difficulties as the source of the problem ("such a kid"), communicating a clear preference for the psychological framing. This redirects the conversation away from instructional aspects, further strengthened by the explicit mentioning of her own lack of agency in helping the student and solving the problem.

Affirmation of the Psychological Framing and the Teacher's Limited Agency.
Following a few clarification questions by the team members to better understand Rachel's framing, leading teacher Leah attempts to rephrase the problem, as she understands it, in her own words.

| LEAH: | I will try to mirror what I hear. I hear that there's a student in the classroom who is stuck, both from the emotional aspect and also socially and academically. And you don't even know how to approach him. In fact, you ask, you say: I need tools to understand what his problem is, because then, when I know what his problem is, then I will know how to start working with him. |

The main assumptions about the problem as introduced by Rachel are affirmed by Leah. First, she affirms the psychological nature of the problem ("emotional aspect", "self-confidence"), subordinating academic difficulties to psychological ones. Second, Leah echoes Rachel's assumption that she, as a teacher, does not have the professional expertise required to diagnose these difficulties ("you say: I need tools to understand what his problem is"). Third, she affirms that an exact diagnosis is required, prior to starting to work with this student. Leah confirms the idea that a psychological diagnosis is prerequisite to any teacher action with this student, thus affirming the teacher's current inability to act.

Prognostic Framing: Shifting Responsibility to the Parents. From that moment, the team adopts Rachel's problem framing and its assumptions, and co-constructs a series of arguments shifting responsibility for the student's failure to his parents.

SARAH:	As I understood it, he is not treated, he doesn't receive help, his difficulties are not addressed
YASMIN:	Does he receive any help?
RACHEL:	When we approached his mother last year and shared with her the difficulties. When they heard it, they approached both occupational therapy for a period and therapeutic horseback-riding for a period. And nothing. Didn't help. I mean, I don't think it advanced him in any way.
SIGAL:	Do you feel the student at this moment is not treated?
RACHEL:	He is not diagnosed and he is not treated.

Sarah expresses her understanding that the student is not "treated" and does not receive any "help". Although these terms could be used to refer to a variety of school-based or external interventions, within this context, they denote interventions typically provided by external professionals ("occupational therapists", "therapeutic horseback riding") and coordinated (and funded) by the parents. Rachel also mentions that the previous year, such parent-coordinated solutions did not prove effective, undermining the assumption that the student's difficulties should be treated by external professionals. Yet these remarks remain unattended to by group members. Instead, teacher C emphasizes another detail in Rachel's description, the fact that the parents no longer provide the student with these treatments, further attributing responsibility for the student's failure to the parents.

For the next 25 *min*, the conversation focuses on the student's parents, as the teachers consider such questions as: "Are they involved enough?"; "Is it important to them?"; "Why

didn't they take the student to psycho-didactic diagnosis? "; "How can they be recruited to be more active?"

This focal case analysis exemplifies the negotiation process over the diagnostic framing of a problem of practice initially framed as located with a specific student. This process included an introduction of two incongruent problem frames put forward by the consulting teacher. The first, the pedagogical frame, points to the student's misunderstanding of specific curricular content as the locus of the problem, while the second, the psychological frame, emphasizes the student's psycho-didactic and psycho-social deficits as the source of the problem. Despite team members' initial suggestions to adopt the pedagogical frame, the consulting teacher communicates her clear preference for the psychological diagnostic framing, which is then affirmed by the leading teacher and adopted by the rest of the team. This negotiation process revealed mechanisms leading to the positioning of the student's parents (and not the teacher) as those capable and responsible for resolving the problem. In particular, the following chain of reasoning emerged: (a) students' difficulties are psychological in nature; (b) teachers lack the professional expertise necessary to diagnose and intervene in these types of problems; (c) help and treatment should be provided by external professionals; and (d) the student's parents are those responsible for coordinating (and funding) these interventions.

Focal Case Analysis 2: Teacher Workgroup Dialogue Following a Classroom Composition-oriented Framing of a Problem of Practice

The second focal case was selected to explore the mechanisms of problem reframing with a classroom composition-oriented initial framing, and the rationales leading to diminished teacher agency. The case is a 41 *min* peer consultation taking place in a first grade Hebrew language arts teacher workgroup in mid-November. The workgroup consisted of three first grade homeroom teachers: Anat (LT), Moria and Lia. The team's language arts coach, Naama, took on the role of the dialogue facilitator in this meeting, as LT Anat was the consulting teacher. It was the team's first time using the peer consultation protocol. Anat consults with her colleagues about a group of eight students in her classroom who struggle academically and behaviorally. We chose this specific case for its high focus on the logistical aspects of school resource allocation: School personnel were referred to in 54% of the units, and only an accumulated 5 *min* out of the entire 41 *min* activity were devoted to discussing pedagogical or instructional strategies.

Consulting Tacher's Introduction: A Classroom Composition-oriented Problem Frame. Anat introduces her problem:

ANAT:	A very, very complicated classroom, both socially and academically. There is a very large group of students who entered the first grade not prepared, without letter recognition, who do not recognize beginning sounds, ending sounds. Very, very, very struggling, very. And this is a group of almost eight kids… and this is not only the academic difficulty. It comes together with behavioral difficulties. They do not sit still. You give them an assignment and they don't do it. Noise, but not noise of work, noise of disruption… and I break my teeth what to do with them. I have tried many times to give them different assignments. I have tried to take a group with me and then send them back, while they… kind of differentiated instruction. Very, very difficult.

Anat's introduction includes several features that could have opened opportunities to explore possible teacher actions. She briefly describes her attempts to deal with the problem ("I have tried many times to give them different assignments. I have tried to take a group with me and then send them back, while they… kind of differentiated teaching"), and also specifies the students' difficulties in grappling with the materials and content ("without letter recognition"; "do not recognize beginning sounds"). However, though these types of difficulties are not uncommon during the first months of 1st grade reading acquisition in Israel[1], the phrasing used by Anat to describe them ("without letter recognition"; "It comes together with behavioral difficulties") implies that these are not temporary issues, but rather static student characteristics that cannot be easily overcome.

Negotiating the Problem Frame. For the next three minutes, Naama, the facilitator, queries Anat to better understand what specifically bothers her, and proposes a slightly different framing to the problem:

NAAMA:	In fact, you are saying that this behavioral problem that you see in several kids, in fact, requires you to approach the whole instructional process differently, and it is different from what you… that is, it contradicts something… or it prevents you from succeeding in expressing yourself and the things you are… of the instructional process.

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[1] In Israel, reading acquisition instruction formally begins in 1st grade. Different kindergarten options and programs provide different levels of preparatory reading instruction, which can cause considerable heterogeneity at the start of 1st grade.

Naama proposes that the source of the problem is rooted in a gap between the ideal instructional process that Anat envisioned and the reality she has to deal with. Thus, an alternative framing of the problem is proposed, whereby the teacher's perceptions and expectations could be the source.

Negotiating Framing: Making Explicit the Underlying Assumptions of the Problem Frame. Anat rejects the problem frame proposed by Naama, further elaborating her perspective on the problem:

ANAT:	No, no, that is not what I am saying. I say, I don't have any problem adjusting myself to them and to their abilities and their needs. My problem is that I go ten levels lower than I want, but OK, if that will advance them later I will pay the price… but even with a very, very basic adjustment, they do not manage to do it.
NAAMA:	And then what? And then it means what?
ANAT:	And then instead of being focused with a group and doing work, I… kind of have to calm them down or I have to move among them one by one, because they do not understand the assignment. Do you understand what I mean?

Anat explicates two assumptions about the nature of the problem which, in our interpretation, showcases how a classroom-composition oriented framing of the problem of practice may lead to a discussion in which limited agency it attributed to the teacher. The first assumption, already implied in the initial introduction, describes the student difficulties as unresolvable ("…but even with a very, very basic adjustment, they do not succeed in doing so"). The second assumption relates to the way the consulting teacher defines her role in classroom. The last utterance ("And then instead of being focused with a group and doing work") communicates the idea that the teacher's "work" lies in instructing the non-struggling students in the classroom, while the struggling group of students is perceived as getting in the teachers' way in doing her job. That is, the students' difficulties are identified not as the locus for intervention, but rather as the source of the problem.

Normalization and Reduction of Agency. Once the students have been labeled as the source of the teacher's problem, but not a potential locus for intervention, the discussion bolsters this characterization in two ways. First, Anat's colleagues normalize her difficulties with the class, saying "I teach in her classroom and strongly agree with what she is saying, it's something highly unusual in this cohort, something you don't usually see" and "I want to

tell you that I hear that there's something in the group of students this year, from several schools. I don't know, something in the students this year". In this manner, the classroom composition problem is not Anat's alone, is certainly not her fault, and may not even be her responsibility. Naama attempts to pull the discussion in a more productive, solution-oriented direction:

NAAMA:	Let's now think about suggestions. How do we recruit our experience, how in fact do we…how can one deal with this situation?
MORIA:	I think that what Anat is doing right now is the right thing to do, she just adjusts herself to them. The question is how can one help, raise this entire group of kids
NAAMA:	So for you as a suggestion?
MORIA:	I wonder, I really wonder to myself what
NAAMA:	What can one do?
MORIA:	Yes
NAAMA:	So, what?
MORIA:	hmmm… A lot of work with cards, word cards
NAAMA:	With these specific kids or in general, looking at the whole classroom?
MORIA:	I think, in general, with them. But how hmmmm… how do you raise them like to at least average level?

Moria's initial response ratifies Anat's teaching strategies, rendering her a good teacher despite her inability to solve the problem: "I think that what Anat is doing right now is the right thing to do". When it comes to suggesting what else Anat could do, Moria reinforces the notion that there is simply nothing to be done. She has only one ill-defined course of action to propose ("word cards"), and when pressed, speaks with hesitation, saying "I wonder" and twice asking "how you can really raise the level" of these students, in a way that makes it sound as if you clearly cannot. The teachers thus move towards a position whereby not only is Anat absolved of responsibility for the struggling students, she is divested of agency to even try.

Anat steps in to reassert some measure of agency by describing in greater detail some practices she has attempted in organizing groupwork in her classroom. She describes her pedagogical reasoning:

ANAT:	I understood that if their attention span is ten minutes at best, there's no reason to waste these ten minutes by having them break their teeth on their own. For my perspective, let them play with play dough or color, but for the ten minutes that they're with me, they should be with me.

In describing this strategy for maximizing her time with them, Anat echoes her colleagues' limited expectations of these students and fundamentally gives up on their learning and progression within the greater classroom framework.

  Prognostic Reframing Towards Resource Allocation. Until this point, several attempts to discuss what Anat can actually do in her classroom, including both Moria's "cards" and Anat's groupwork solution, have not garnered significant attention. At this point, nine minutes into the consultation, a different prognostic frame is proposed by Naama: "What's the story with your co-teaching hours? Who comes in, uh, how's your reinforcement?". Naama refers to a policy in Israeli elementary lower grades allocating additional personnel hours and placing a second teacher in the classroom. She thus queries Anat regarding the specific number of hours she receives and how they are filled. This line of questioning shifts the conversation away from solutions directly related to Anat's actions in the classroom, and towards other means of managing the challenging students, outside of Anat's sphere of influence. The remainder of the discussion focuses primarily upon resource allocation, including a rapidly rejected suggestion that Anat receive more co-teaching hours and attempts to determine whether her teaching aide is a legitimate resource for this purpose. One suggestion supported by the teachers involves removing the challenging students from Anat's classroom for several hours per week: "For sure, there are hours that a co-teacher takes students from my classroom that fall on Anat's language arts lessons, let her take her students also, they'll sit together".

  In this manner, the teachers propose shifting school resource allocation in ways that will solve Anat's problem. This speaks to their willingness to help, their desire that their colleague not have to struggle alone with her problem, and to the generally collegial and cooperative ethos of their workgroup. However, they also shift the prognostic framing from pedagogical means of addressing the students' challenges to organizational means of removing these students, and their challenges, from Anat's sole jurisdiction. This shift is well-aligned with the framing of the problem as helping Anat, and not as helping the students: The students are the source of Anat's problem but she need not, and indeed cannot, engage in pedagogical interventions to address their challenges.

Discussion and Conclusions

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This study contributes to research on professional learning in school-based, peer-led, teacher communities. We focus on a practice considered to be generative for productive professional learning in such settings, namely: collaborative analysis of problems arising from the teachers' own classroom practice (e.g., Horn & Kane, 2015; Lefstein et al., 2020b; Little, 2002; Louis & Stoll, 2009). We conducted in-depth exploration into a surprising finding identified in previous work, whereby teachers consulting with one another regarding their problems of practice attributed to themselves only limited agency in solving and addressing these problems (Babichenko et al., 2017). Specifically, we focused on the interactional norms and routines associated with different problem framings and their consequences for agency attribution.

Summary and Discussion of the Main Findings

The findings of the current study reveal considerable variation in the initial framing of instructional problems. In a third of the cases, the problem framing was teaching-oriented: The consulting teacher signals that the locus of the problem is in his/her own teaching, provides information about these instructional practices, and explicitly asks the team to propose alternative courses of action. Two other problem framings were identified: in the specific student problem frame (29% of cases), the difficulties of a particular student are described as the locus of the problem, whereas in the classroom composition-problem frame (24% of cases) the consulting teacher locates the problem with a specific subgroup of students in his/her class.

All three types of initial problem framings could potentially have precipitated conversations positioning teachers as responsible for resolving these problems. It could even be hypothesized that focus on the specific learning difficulties encountered by one particular student or by a particular group of students in the classroom would precipitate an extensive exploration of teaching practices through the lens of the experience of particular student(s).

However, as the findings of the quantitative phase of the study revealed, initial problem framing was found to largely determine the ways in which the sources of and solutions to the problem were collectively constructed in the ensuing discussion, particularly regarding who was positioned as capable of and responsible for resolving the problem. That is, diagnostic framing of the nature of the problem was found to determine to a large extent the diagnostic framing of blame/responsibility attribution. Only when the initial problem framing was teaching-oriented did the ensuing conversations tend to be highly focused on teacher actions, with teachers positioned as primary agentive actors. By contrast, when problems were initially framed in terms of a particular *student*, they tended to be followed by lengthy

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discussions of the student's parents, locating them as the primary agentive actors. Finally, when the problem was framed in terms of classroom composition, the ensuing conversations were found to focus mainly on logistical and administrative aspects of classroom resource allocation, in the form of additional school personnel.

These conversations feature teachers' critical investigation of the broader systems, structures and agents that shape the lives and educational experiences of students, and as such they may be valuable in and of themselves. However, the current study shows that these conversations also orient teachers' collective attention away from investigating the ways *they* might exert agency in their work with individual (or groups of) struggling students. That is, through dialogues initially framed in terms of specific student or classroom composition, participating teachers learn that the difficulties of struggling students lie outside their realm of responsibility.

The focal case analyses uncovered the implicit logics underlying the shift from teachers to other actors as the main agents responsible for and capable of resolving the problem in the student-oriented and classroom composition-oriented problem frames. Analysis of the specific student-oriented focal case demonstrated that casting the students' difficulties (even academic ones) in psychological, therapeutic terms, positions teachers as having insufficient professional expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of these difficulties. When students' difficulties are cast in psychological terms, "help" and "treatment" are understood as interventions provided by external therapeutic professionals and not by the teachers themselves. Accordingly, responsibility for the student's failure and for resolution of his/her difficulties is perceived as located with his parents, who are responsible for these out-of-school diagnostic and therapeutic activities. In this way, collaborative analyses of specific student-oriented problems do not seem to encourage teachers to experiment with ways to adjust their teaching to their students' needs, but seem rather to ratify teacher inaction towards students with difficulties.

The unfolding of the classroom-composition problem frame was found to entail repeated characterization of the students' difficulties as fixed, unresolvable traits, and their identification as the source of the teacher's problem, rather than the locus for the teacher's intervention. The classroom composition-oriented problem framing thus differed from the student-oriented framing, in which students were perceived as targets for help and intervention. Compatible with the identification of the "problematic students" as the source of the problem, the solutions proposed by the teams to the classroom-composition problems

mainly focused on finding ways to remove the struggling students from the teacher's realm of responsibility by recruiting additional school personnel for that purpose.

It is important to note that within both problem frames, teachers resorted to deficit discourses about students, as part of the process of absolving themselves and their colleagues of both responsibility and agency. That is, they engaged in discursive processes of (re)defining students, actions which no doubt can impact their classroom practice (for more on deficit orientations in teacher workgroup conversations, see Louie, 2016; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). However, these actions fall short of the agentive moves coded by the CLIP variable *focus on teacher actions*, and their potential implications are beyond the scope of this study.

Main Contributions to the Literature on School-based, Teacher-led Learning

The findings presented here highlight potential limitations of collaborative peer consultation, generally considered a productive means to facilitate collaborative analysis of problems of practice in teacher-led workgroup meetings (Benshoff & Paisley, 1996; Lefstein et al., 2020a; Segal et al., 2018). The quantitative findings showed that more than 60% of the consulting teachers initially frame their problems of practice as located at a specific-student or at the composition of a particular classroom. They also revealed that the underlying logics of these problem frames shift responsibility for resolving these problems away from teachers to other agents.

Second, detailed analyses of two focal cases showed how the taken-for-granted assumptions behind the student and classroom-composition problem framings dominated the dialogue, despite some attempts to re-frame the problems. In both cases, this process involved the suggestion of alternative (more agentive) problem frames by team members and their rejection by the consulting teacher, followed by the team's affirmation of the problem frame and its assumptions. Thus, despite attempts to negotiate the consulting teacher's framing, (s)he seemed to have the final say in determining the dominant framing and the general agenda of the conversation. Workgroup members as well as the LT appeared to be sensitive and responsive to the consulting teacher's messages about the way she sought to define the problem, its sources and its solutions, and sought to align the conversation with these messages.

Consulting teachers' tendency to avoid the teaching-oriented problem frame and the participants' responsiveness to the consulting teacher's preferences in framing the problem might be explained by the high vulnerability and face threat (i.e., threat to the teacher's public image) that the teaching-oriented frame entails. A recent study conducted by Vedder-Weiss,

Segal and Lefstein (2019) showed that workgroup discussions in which teachers' practice was revealed (in their case, in the context of discussion of video excerpts from one another's classrooms) rendered them particularly vulnerable, yielding relatively high levels of face work (i.e., moves made by participants to protect the video-recorded teacher's public image). Further research is needed into the ways in which workgroup participants manage and negotiate face threat in peer consultation activities and how these shape dialogue.

Main Contributions to the Problem Framing Literature

The work presented here also contributes to the literature on problem framing: First, existing studies on problem framing in teacher team dialogue have predominantly focused on how teachers frame issues pertaining to struggling students (Bannister, 2015; Coburn, 2006; Horn, 2007). In the current study, we have broadened this definition to include instructional problems of practice in general and explored how teachers frame them in peer consultation activities.

Second, previous research into associations between problem framing and the positioning of teachers as active agents in professional conversations has been based solely on qualitative, case-study methodology (Bannister, 2015; Coburn, 2006; Horn, 2007; Horn, Kane & Wilson, 2015). These associations were confirmed in the present study using a quantitative methodology. The findings reported here thus corroborate claims about the importance of problem framing and how it shapes opportunities for professional learning in teacher professional conversations (Horn & Kane, 2015; Lefstein et al., 2020a).

Finally, several studies have explored teacher team conversations about struggling students and sought to explain why teachers are often positioned with low agency in these conversations (Bannister, 2015; Coburn, 2006; Horn, 2007). They have suggested that this lack of agency is due to the (unproductive) framing of the students' difficulties as inherent traits. The focal case analysis presented here suggests an additional or alternative explanation, namely that it may be related to more general tendencies in the educational landscape to psychologize and medicalize the discussion and treatment of students' academic difficulties (Conrad, 2007; Madsen, 2018). Thus, the focal case analysis illuminates previously unnoticed, undesirable implications of these psychologization tendencies and points to possible foci of intervention to support teacher agency with struggling students by emphasizing the understanding of students' difficulties in pedagogical (and not psychological) terms – and therefore within the teachers' purview of action.

Based on the findings presented here, we would also like to highlight several practical implications, particularly relevant for teacher leaders and other facilitators of teacher

conversations around problems of practice. First, they bring to the fore the importance of initial problem framing in the preparation and presentation phase of a teacher team activity. Presenting teachers should be encouraged and supported to adopt teaching-oriented problem framing when preparing and presenting materials for discussing problems of practice.

However, as described earlier, the student-oriented and the classroom composition-oriented problem frames are not un-productive, by definition. We have argued that a series of common, implicit assumptions about the nature of students' difficulties (and the nature of teachers' jobs) account for the drift away from teachers to other agents, as responsible for resolving the problem. Facilitators' attentiveness to these underlying assumptions might enable them to anticipate and recognize these processes more effectively *during* the conversation, and re-orient it toward more productive framing.

The current study provides only a first glimpse into the complex social processes that shape the team's focus and adherence to specific problem frames. Social processes that enable productive re-framing of problems of practice in teachers' professional conversations are worthy of further investigation on a larger scale and in greater depth.

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Tables

Table 1.

Focus on teacher actions per type of initial problem framing

Diagnostic framing of problem of practice	N of cases	Percentage of dialogue units focused on teacher actions
Specific student-oriented	5	46%
Classroom composition-oriented	4	38%
Teaching-oriented	5	62%

Table 2.

Reference to parents and school personnel in the dialogues, per initial problem framing type

Diagnostic framing of problem of practice	Percentage of dialogue units referring to parents	Percentage of dialogue units referring to school personnel or "school"
Specific student-oriented	57%	22%
Classroom composition-oriented	18%	43%
Teaching-oriented	19%	16%

Appendix A

Consultancy Protocol (as presented in the handbook provided to the LTs in the intervention program)

Central aims of the peer consultation activity
To allow a teacher in the team (the consulting teacher) to present to her/his colleagues a problem or dilemma with which (s)he is struggling, and to think together about possible ways to solve it. A consultation of this sort is meant to help all of the participants deepen their understanding of the issue under discussion and be exposed to a variety of pedagogical ideas.

Protocol Elements	
Time frame	*Protocol Element*
5 min.	**Introduction and coordination of expectations:** The facilitator presents the goals of the meeting, its planned progression, and important points of emphasis.
10-15 min.	**Presentation of the case and definition of the problem:** The consulting teacher presents the case to the group, using rich representations and detailed descriptions of what happened and of relevant details that may help to understand the problem. The other participants then ask clarification questions, and the consulting teacher replies.
10-15 min.	**Analysis of the problem:** Participants raise possible explanations as to the causes of the problem and their implications, including concomitant suggestions for reformulating the problem, if relevant. The consulting teacher responds to what she has heard and refocuses the problem in light of the analysis.
20 min.	**Suggestions for coping with the problem:** Participants raise possible courses of action or means of coping with the presented problem, and weigh their relative advantages and disadvantages. The consulting teacher responds to these suggestions.
5 min.	**Generalization:** Discussion of a general or systemic issue that arose during the consultation. (Open discussion led by the facilitator.)
5 min.	**Reflection and summary:** The consulting teacher summarizes the process she underwent throughout the consultation: How did she feel? To what extent did the process help her? The other participants consider the process they underwent: How was it? What have we learned? How can we improve the process next time?

Appendix B

Table B1.

Descriptive data about the peer consultation cases identified in the data set (N = 20)

Nr.	Type of workgroup	Type of school	Year in project	Date of meeting	Content	Problem framing
1	Language arts	Elementary	1st	Nov 2015	The 1st grade teacher consults about her "complicated" classroom, with many students who entered 1-st grade without letter recognition and with many behavioral difficulties.	Classroom composition
2	English	Elementary	1st	Dec 2015	How to work differentially in a very heterogeneous classroom with a large number of energetic behaviorally challenging students?	Classroom composition
3	Math	Elementary	1st	Dec 2015	The 4th grade teacher consults about a student who completes the test quickly and attests that the "test was very easy", but none of his answers is right.	Specific- student
4	Individual/small group lessons	Elementary	1st	Jan 2016	A 3rd grade teacher consults about her work with a small group of poor readers, chosen by the home-room teacher. She describes the high heterogeneity of the group as the main challenge.	Classroom composition
5	Language arts	Elementary	1st	Jan 2016	The teacher consults about a student who performs much better when tested in a separate room, than in the classroom. The consulting teacher asks for possible explanations for the phenomena.	Specific student
6	Language arts	Elementary	1st	Feb 2016	The IT teacher consults about the students' difficulty to follow a series of instructions without her help.	Unspecified
7	Individual/small group lessons	Elementary	1st	Mar 2016	The consulting teacher describes a challenging conversation with a mother during which the mother aggressively accused her of being responsible for the student's failure. The teacher asks the team to consult her how to behave in such extreme cases.	Teacher-parents interaction (excluded from focal data set)
8	Evaluation	Elementary	1st	Jun 2016	The consulting teacher describes a conversation with her cousin in which she insisted that as a parent she expects verbal evaluations in the end of year evaluation reports to focus on the strengths of the child and avoid critique. The teacher asks the team to share their	Teaching

					opinion whether and how should they include critique and points for improvement in their verbal evaluations.	
9	Language arts	Elementary	1st	Dec 2016	The 3rd grade homeroom teacher consults about her students' disrespectful behavior when other teachers teaching the classroom, as opposed to a highly respectful behavior during her own lessons.	Unspecified
10	Grade level team	High school (special education)	1st	Dec 2016	The teacher consults about the way reading lessons should be used with those (special education) students in her classroom (ages 17-18) who did not acquire even the most basic reading skills (letter recognition).	Teaching
11	Language arts	Elementary	1st	Jan 2017	The 4th grade teacher consults about a student who is high achieving academically but is very challenging behaviorally.	Specific student
12	School climate	Elementary	1st	Jan 2017	The teacher consults about a student on the autistic spectrum who seems to prefer to play alone, but her mother is very worried about it and asks the teacher to push her harder to play with others.	Teacher-parents interaction
13	English	Elementary	1st	Jan 2017	The teacher consults about ways to work differentially in a large, highly heterogeneous classroom.	Teaching
14	Language arts	Elementary	1st	Jan 2017	The teacher consults about a student who after a whole month of intensive instruction of persuasive writing, came to her and admitted that he doesn't know how to write a persuasive paragraph.	Specific student
15	Grade-level team	Elementary	1st	Jan 2017	The teacher consults about the end of year evaluation of a student in her classroom who had made a lot of progress during the year and have begun to participate and to put much effort in her work, but still has very low grades. Despite her efforts she is supposed to have a very low grade in her evaluation card.	Teaching
16	Heterogeneous	Elementary	2nd	Feb 2017	The teacher consults about ways to communicate with parents about violent incidences in the classroom (with both the aggressor's parents and the victim's parents)?	Teacher-parents interaction
17	Language arts	Elementary	2nd	Mar 2017	The 2nd grade teacher consults about her work with a small group of students who had been identified as poor readers.	Teaching

18	Math	Elementary	1-st	Mar 2017	The 6th grade teacher consults about three students in her classroom who perform much lower than the other students despite extensive attempts to provide them with different types of help.	Specific student
19	Science	Elementary	1-st	May 2017	How do I neutralize my own negative feelings towards some of the students during the lessons?	Teacher emotional regulation
20	Math	Elementary	1-st	May 2017	The teacher consults about her work with a very heterogeneous classroom. How to work with them? On what grade-level curriculum to focus?	Classroom composition

Appendix C

A coding scheme for systematic categorization of the initial problem framing

The consultation case presentation, made by the consulting teacher, is first analyzed along three independent dichotomous parameters.

(1) Was emphasis placed on a specific student or a classroom composition as the locus or the source of the problem?

(2) Did the consulting teacher describe in detail the actions taken by her (what does she usually do? What did she try to do to deal with the problem?)?

(3) Was the teacher's request to the team directed towards teacher actions? (e.g., What shall I do? How can I improve…?)

The problem frame category is determined, based on the coding of the three abovementioned parameters, as described in the following table.

Table C1

Systematic coding of initial problem framing

Problem Frame	*Was a specific student/s or a classroom composition described as the locus of the problem?*	*Were teacher actions described in detail?*	*Was the final request directed towards teacher actions?*
Student- oriented/ classroom comp.-oriented	V	-	-
Student-oriented/ classroom comp.-oriented	V	V	-
Student-oriented/ classroom comp.-oriented	V	-	V
Teaching-oriented	-	V	V
Unspecified	V	V	V