

Unheard Voices:

Parentally Bereaved Danish Students' Experiences and Perceptions of
the Support Received Following the Return to School.

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Interviewing Bereaved Children: Ethics



IMPOSSIBLE

Ethical Dilemmas when Interviewing Children

- Children are considered vulnerable.
- Bereaved individuals are considered vulnerable.
- Death and bereavement are considered sensitive topics likely to cause participant distress.
- Interviewing vulnerable children, who are made even more vulnerable through having experienced a traumatic event on a painful topic.

Overcoming the Pitfalls

- Finding participants who had experience talking about their loss
- Finding a way to provide support during and following the interviews
- Creating a safe environment, where painful dilemmas could be discussed

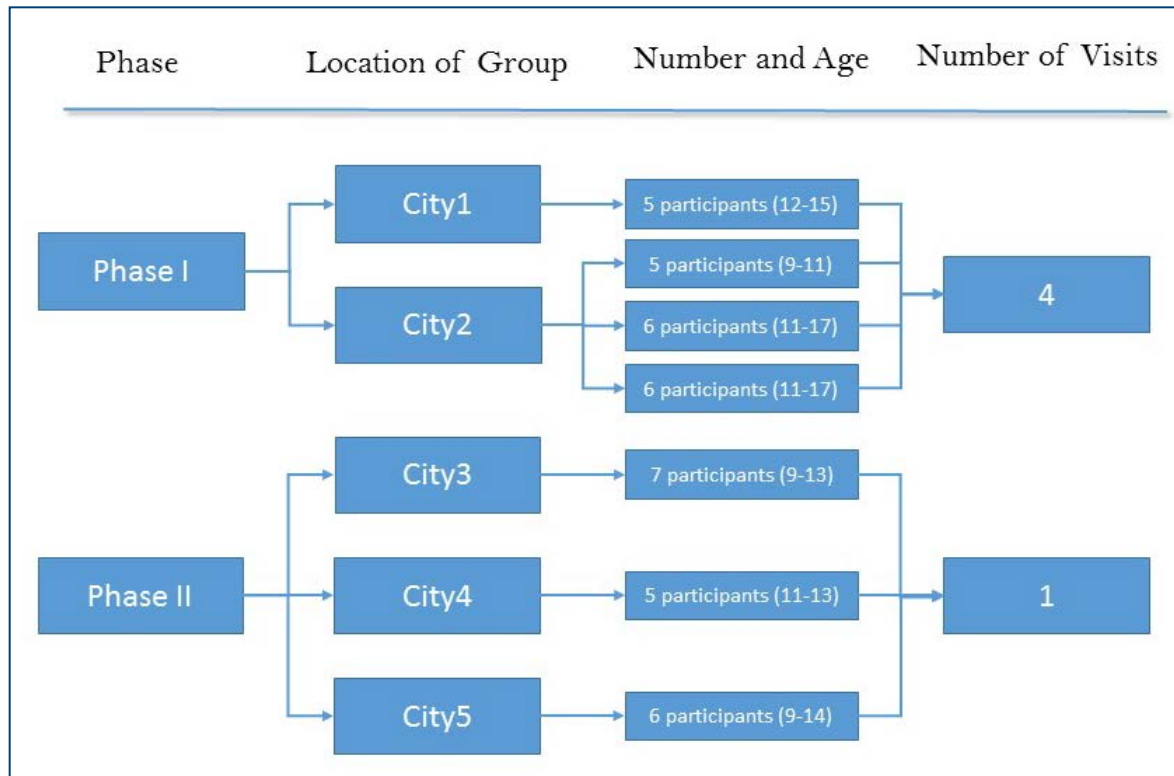
Setting up the Study

- Utilising Grief Groups
 - What is a grief group
 - Benefits: Pre/post support, safety, experience, grief councilor
- Utilising Focus Groups
 - Support group interview
 - Benefits: Less pressure, less power, conversations



Study Design

- 39 participants from five different grief groups, divided into seven groups.
- One Pre-teen group, three teen groups and three mixed groups.
- From pre-established grief groups to enhance safety.



Collaborating with Children

- The principle of respect
 - Seeing participants as experts on their own lives
 - Seeing participants as collaboration partners rather than subjects.
 - Always considering what would be the respectful thing to do
- Example: The grief counselor who got ill

Encountered Dilemmas

- Only certain groups could be interviewed – the better ones.
- Dealing with painful memories – encountering crying children



Should we Interview Children on Sensitive Topics?

- Ethics has to come first
- Perhaps its okay to feel sad
- Pre/post support needed
- Need to have plans for when you do cover painful topics



Children's Views on being Interviewed

- Sense of duty, sense of commitment
- Proud to help others in a similar situation
- Interested in sharing stories and comparing experiences



Being Part of the project

- Amara, 12: You know... that your opinions are actually important and things like that... That what you are telling, it spreads, what you felt, that's very important. Also, to others.
- Lis, 12: Also, that there are no opinions on who is right or wrong. You know, that all answers have value.
- Amara, 12: Kind of what the group said, but that you tell what could be done better, it is not quite the same, but I think it is important that we told... It can dissipate and help others, who might be experiencing the same things we have.

That we Cannot Handle it

Context: Collaborating with students

- Interviewer: So, I am meeting another group of teachers...what should I tell them?
- Sofie, 12: Then they should consider if they could put themselves in our place. But, just to think that we actually really would like to have some influence. After all, it's all about us, so why should we not have any influence?
- Freja, 14: It makes it easier if we know... For example, if you are the type who prefers to act as if nothing has happened, then it does not help if your teacher comes over and hugs you all the time, like “everything will be fine!” ... The other thing is that it is important you [the teacher] ask “how would you like it...we need to find a way to help you, because you know best what it is you need”.
- Interviewer: So you should also be allowed to have a say?
- Lisa, 15: ...I am kind of thinking... that perhaps they [the teachers] should try to look at it from another direction. That actually you become even more sad if they do not ask, “how would you like to be helped” ...

Listening to Student Voices

- I do believe it would have been beneficial if we had received some form of preparation about what it means to live with an ill parent. So that they also know how you are feeling so that you avoid stupid remarks from your classmates... Because it's all about communication... and you can't do that because people don't know how to... and I don't think we are good enough at doing so because we are afraid to talk about it... Because it is death and that is something uncomfortable... we are not invincible... Cancer should not be a taboo, especially not when there is someone sitting in the class who might be feeling horribly because the classmates are afraid of hurting that person... (Anna, 14)

Interested in the project, Read more at:

- Lytje, M. (2017). Towards a model of loss navigation in adolescence. *Death Studies*, 0(0), 1–12. Advance online publication.
- Lytje, M. (2017). The success of a planned bereavement response – a survey on teacher use of bereavement response plans when supporting grieving children in Danish schools. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 35(1), 28–38.
- Lytje, M. (2016). Voices We Forget - Danish Students Experience of Returning to School Following Parental Bereavement. *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*. Advance online publication.
- Lytje, M. (2016a). The Danish Bereavement Response in 2015—Historic Development and Evaluation of Success. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 0(0), 1–10.
- Lytje, M. (2016b). Unheard Voices: Parentally Bereaved Danish Students' Experiences and Perceptions of the Support Received Following the Return to School. (Doctorial Dissertation). University of Cambridge, Cambridge.
- Lytje, M. (2013). Handling bereavement in Danish schools – A system at a crossroad? *Bereavement Care*, 32(3), 131–139. Lytje, M. (2014). Sorgplaner - en success eller ej? *Gjallerhorn*, (18), 52–61.