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Kazumi Tomoi
Osaka Metropolitan University
ORCID – 0000-0002-0588-8921

CREATING A PLACE FOR DIALOGUE ON DEATH TO FORM VIEWS OF LIFE AND DEATH – ACTION RESEARCH IN THE COMMUNITY*

Introduction: Views on life and death are the basis of everyday life for people at the end of life to express their intentions about where and how they want to spend their time, and for healthy people they are the basis for living life to the fullest.
Research Aim: Community dialogue would be effective in helping community residents form views on life and death. This study aimed to create a place where healthy residents could talk about death and form views on life and death.
Research method: The study was conducted using the action research method. Residents of the study community who were unfamiliar with death met there and discussed a topic they had designated related to life and death. The meetings were held monthly for a year. About a dozen people attended each time. Notes from the meetings were subjected to qualitative analysis.
Findings: A safe place to share time and space was created in the community. The process of creating the place was divided into three phases: the phase of raising interest, the phase of initiating participation and the phase of leading activity, by focusing on the theme of dialogue, participants' awareness and the balance between the author and the participants.
Conclusion: Study participants deepened their thoughts on death through internal and external dialogues and formed their unique views on life and death while pursuing psychological well-being. The group embraced dialogue with empathy, creating a collective narrative about death that recursively empowered participants. The dual dynamics of discovering death both individually and collectively were confirmed.

Keywords: views on life and death, action research, dialogue, narrative, community residents, place-making

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INTRODUCTION

The French historian Ariès (1975) stated that death has been taboo since the 20th century. In the early 21st century, death attitudes have been revived (Jacobsen & Petersen, 2020), and managing dying and grief has become a significant issue involving individuals, families, and communities (Walter, 2017). Meanwhile, medical ethics and end-of-life issues are becoming more complex as medical technology advances. It has been pointed out that our lives have become alienated from the culture of death (Jacobsen & Petersen, 2020; Koksvik & Richards, 2021) and that our views of life and death have become "hollowed out", that is, the meaning of death is no longer understood (Hiroi, 2001). Death is not only an issue for people in their final days. Thinking about one's own death or the death of someone close to one, which may come at any time, is important even for healthy people. Thinking about death can lead to a fuller life. However, it would be difficult for ordinary people to talk or think about death on a daily basis. Most life-and-death studies have focused on patients, families, and health professionals, with scant research on the general public and few studies to encourage end-of-life discussions among healthy people (Borrat-Besson et al., 2020; Strupp et al., 2021; Von Blanckenburg et al., 2021).

There are the developmental psychological aspects of the individual (Levinson, 1978) and the aspects of relationships with others (Kondo, 2010) in the formation of a view of life and death. Yamada (2000) stated that death is a loss from the perspective of an individual life, but it becomes a force that transforms loss into generation from the perspective of a larger generational cycle. This concept of inheritance corresponds to generativity, which Erikson identified as a theme of mid-adult development (Erikson et al., 1986). The essence of generativity is caring, nurturing, and maintaining, which creates a cycle of life and a new cycle in the newly born (Erikson et al., 1986). McAdams and de St Aubin (1992) clarified the construct of generativity and identified "agency" and "communion" as the fundamental motives of generativity. Then they stated that "narration", the last component of generativity, gives meaning to the entire structure. Agency is to assert, expand, and develop itself, and communion is to love, care for, and relate intimately to others (McAdams & de St Aubin, 1992). Tomoi (2022) revealed that agency and communion are the core components of the view of life and death. In the formation of views of life and death, agency would promote an internal dialogue with the self from a developmental psychological perspective, while communion would promote an external dialogue from a relational perspective. Meanwhile, narration provides unity, purpose, and meaning to life, and enables humans to define themselves in society (McAdams & de St Aubin, 1992).

The narrative approach would be effective in summarizing life and thinking about death. The narrative approach allows us to envision a hypothetical world. People who are not familiar with death have few opportunities to consider it (Tomoi, 2020, 2021). The deaths that we talk about familiarly are other people's deaths, not our own. One must assume a hypothetical world to think of one's death. A nar-

rative that creates a possible or assumptive world through "hypothesized reality" is effective to consider the aging and dying self (Yamada, 2000, p. 29).

Practical examples of narrative approaches include narrative therapy, open dialogue, and dialogue spaces such as philosophy cafes and death cafés. Narratives in groups have an empowering effect (Rappaport, 1995). Death Café (n.d.) is a place that aims to raise awareness about death through casual discussions over a cup of tea, helping people make the most of their lives (Baldwin, 2017; Death Café, n.d.; Fong, 2017; McLoughlin et al., 2016). Oldenburg (1989) presented the concept of a "third place" that is neither home nor work but a neutral place where conversations are held on an equal footing, and the interaction with various people provides the collective knowledge of the members and a healthy outlook on life. A café as a place for interaction is one such place, and Death Café for talking about death is also a third place (Fong, 2017; Koksvik & Richards, 2021). The characteristics of a third place are needed to form views of life and death, and I believe that the elimination of hierarchical relationships among participants and political, religious, and commercial activities provides "psychological safety" (Edmondson & Lei, 2014) and allows them to speak with ease.

Dialogue has been used to think about death. Kellehear (2005) proposes a "compassionate community" model in which the community supports the dying and their families so that they can live well until the end. Breen et al. (2022) note that the development of a "compassionate community" promotes death literacy and dialogue in public spaces and normalizes conversations about death. Efforts to think and talk about death are underway. In Ireland, "Café conversation" creates safe and shared spaces where people can think and talk about the end of life (McLoughlin et al., 2016). "Dying Matters" in the UK supports people in talking about death, dying, bereavement, and making end-of-life plans. Consequently, people can share their worries or wishes with others in the community and gain resources that can help them reflect on the end of life (McLoughlin et al., 2016).

These conversations have the effect of reassembling and personalizing one's narrative on living and dying (Fong, 2017). In addition, they could bring about a paradigm shift in which death is not merely an individual issue but is viewed from the community's perspective (McLoughlin et al., 2016).

RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTION

The purpose of this study was to create a place where healthy citizens talk about death to form their views of life and death. I use the term "views of life and death" to refer to a set of ideas about death or life in this paper.

This study used the action research method that proceeds in spiral steps of planning, action, and fact-finding (Lewin, 1946). Action research is a research

method oriented toward change with the aim of achieving a desirable society, and is practiced jointly by researchers and research subjects who share the same goals, and new values can be expressed, adjusted, reconfigured, and constructed through narratives (Yamori, 2010). These characteristics are consistent with the purpose of this study, which seeks to construct a view of life and death through narratives. The research method was not fixed in advance but remained an outline that was evaluated and modified as it was carried out.

RESEARCH METHOD AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

A meeting was held on the author's university campus to talk about death with local residents once a month for one year. Flyers were distributed within the university and to related organizations and groups in the surrounding area to recruit various participants. Anyone who could access the venue by themselves, and did not require special consideration for communication could participate. Most participants were middle-aged people who had seen the flyers distributed at the university's public lectures. The data collected during the project comprised the author's field notes, recorded data, and handouts.

The participants were fully informed about the study, and only those who gave their voluntary consent in writing were included. The study was approved by the Ethical Review Committee of my university. As this project deals with the sensitive topic of death, I paid attention to the wording and the progress of the conversation.

To analyze the process and effects, I organized the data for each session by creating an "activity progress and evaluation chart" that included the number of participants, the relationship between the author and participants, decisions made, participants' reactions, the project's movement, and encouragement from the author. Next, based on this data, I organized the data in chronological order, referring to "The Process of Conducting Participatory Action Research" by Fujii (2006): (1) encounter between the researcher and the participants/residents/practitioners (the encounter stage); (2) definition of the problem/issue by the researcher and the participants, and agreement/contract on the implementation of participatory action research (the agreement/contract stage); (3) consideration of research methods and formulation of research/action plans regarding the problem/issue (the planning stage); (4) implementation and documentation of the research and action plan, and evaluation of the results (the implementation/evaluation stage); and (5) evaluation of the research and action, clarification of issues, and derivation and reporting of research findings (the reporting stage). The results of this project focused on two points. The first was how we created a place to talk about death, and the second was how the dialogue about death was developed.

RESULTS

The regular meeting, called "Happy Endings Talking Group" (hereafter referred to as the "Talking Group") was a place to talk about death in a café atmosphere with tea and snacks under specific rules.

At the beginning of the project, participants discussed the objectives, policies, and activities of the Talking Group and decided on the following: the object of the Talking Group is to create a place that promotes the formation of a view of life and death while enriching one's life, to provide information and free discussion on death, to be open to local residents, to be participatory activities in which participants plan their own themes and future activities, to respect the uniqueness of the view of life and death, and to not aim for consensus or conclusions. Activities other than the intended purpose such as commercial, political, or religious activities and inappropriate handling of personal information were prohibited.

Initially, most of the participants were those who had seen the flyers distributed at the public lecture at the author's university, but gradually the range of participants expanded in a snowballing fashion. Table 1 presents the meeting themes and the number of participants. The actual number was 24 (5 males and 19 females), and the average number of participants per meeting was 11.9. No personal information other than names was collected.

Table 1.
Results of the "Happy Endings Talking Group"

Session	Month/Year	Themes	Number of participants		
			Total	Male	Female
1	10/2018	What I'm worried about now	10	1	9
2	11/2018	The last days of a single person	8	2	6
3	12/2018	Solitary Death	13	4	8
4	1/2019	Afterlife	12	4	8
5	2/2019	Reflections on "Talking with University Students"	11	4	7
6	3/2019	Dignity at the end of life	13	3	10
7	4/2019	My brightest days	12	4	8
8	5/2019	Adult Guardianship - Lecture by an Administrative Lawyer	15	4	11
9	6/2019	End-of-life Care - Lecture by a visiting nurse	16	4	12
10	7/2019	Tips for Living Your Life to the End	10	2	8
11	8/2019	What I have learned from life and want to pass on	11	2	9
12	9/2019	Reflections on "2nd Talk with University Students" and a Summary.	13	3	10

Source: Author's own study.

Three trial meetings were held to publicize the project and grasp the interests of the participants. This stage corresponds to "(1) the encounter stage" (Fujii, 2006). After this trial, those who were willing to continue participating in the project discussed the project's activity policy. This stage corresponds to "(2) the agreement/contract stage" (Fujii, 2006) and "(3) the planning stage" (Fujii, 2006). These trial meetings resulted in encounters, agreements, and planning.

After these trial meetings, periodic Talking Group were held, and an "activity progress and evaluation chart" was made for each session. Based on this chart, the project was divided into three phases, focusing on changes in projects, themes, attitudes of the participants, and balance between the author and the participants. These were named as "Phase of increasing interest", "Phase of starting participation", and "Phase of leading activity" (Table 2). The results of each phase are described, by concentrating on the creation of a place and the dialogue on death. In the quotations from the narratives, the numbers indicate the session number, and the letters in the alphabet are the participants' IDs.

First, I discuss the Phase of Increasing Interest. This phase was carried out over the trial meetings. The regular meeting differed from the trial meeting in that the participants participated with clear intent and revealed their names rather than remain anonymous. During this phase, they manifested passive attitudes and confusion, and the author initiated the discussion. As the participants were only beginning to develop an interest in the subject and were searching for the future direction, I named this period the "Phase of increasing interest."

Regarding the "creation of place", some confusion about the purpose of this meeting, which had been approved in the planning stage, arose in this phase. For example, while some questioned the meaning of the word "happy" in the name of the meeting, others appreciated it was "a good name". The utility of the meeting was also mentioned: participation refreshes the mind and allows us to organize what we had forgotten (2S) and to be able to connect with somewhere (3S). The rule of not monopolizing the conversation was often ignored, but even in such situations, if everyone was listening attentively, I respected the flow of the conversation without interruption. Overall, the author took the lead because the participants were not yet accustomed to talking about death, and their attitude was passive. However, gradual changes were observed. For example, the theme was initially chosen from among the proposals presented by the author, but from the fourth meeting onward, the participants began to initiate and decide on themes, and a plan was made for one participant to give a lecture. As for the "dialogue on death", "when would we be happy to die?" was a hot topic in the third session, as seen in the below transcript:

Table 2.
Changes in implementation of the "Happy Endings Talking Group"

Phase	1: Phase of increasing interest	2: Phase of starting participation	3: Phase of leading activity
Period (Session)	October 2018-January 2019 (sessions 1-4)	Feb-April 2019 (sessions 5-7)	May-September 2019 (sessions 8-12)
Theme Contents	Fears and concerns about death	Lectures by Professionals Interaction with university students	Life affirmation Passing on to the next generation
How to set up a theme	Participants exchanged opinions and set themes from the examples presented by the author.	Some participants spontaneously proposed the idea and set themes up through the exchange of opinions.	More participants expressed their opinions, and themes were set after discussions.
Attitudes of Participants	・Initiation of interest ・Passive attitude, unable to understand the purpose and direction of the meeting	・Awareness of their own interests ・Motivation for planning	・Specific proposals ・Willingness to enjoy the meeting
Encouragement from author	Actively encouraging people to understand the purpose of the association	Coordinating with relevant parties to realize participants' ideas	Respecting the autonomy of participants and watching over
Balance between participants and author	Led by the author	Participant involvement materialized.	Led by participants
Turning point	・Participation of one's own volition	・Proposal of concrete plans and their realization	・Frequent specific proposals ・Tendency to enjoy the meeting
Creation of Place	· Confusion about the purpose of the meeting · Compliance with prohibitions	・References to the virtual world ・Proposal of cheerful and pleasant themes	・Discussion about the purpose of the meeting and management policy ・Evaluation of the meeting ・Desire to continue the meeting
Dialogue on Death	・An attitude of exploration together ・Dialogue that does not deepen ・Empathetic response	・Collaborative exploration ・Deepening of individual thinking	・A recognition that each participant's death is his or her own ・Comprehensive respect for the speaker

Source: Author's own study.

T: I wonder at what age it is desirable to die.
A: I am alone, so tomorrow or any age is fine.
L: My wife and I will let nature decide whether my wife or I will die first.
Q: Watching from the side, it must be hard for a man to live on his own.
S: I am not sure what kind of long life is happy. My father died of cancer in his 60s, and my mother developed dementia in her mid-80s and has been taken care of for over 10 years. I don't know which is happier or unhappier.

Each participant expressed their opinion based on their family and experiences, and although they were willing to explore together, the discussion did not enter a deep level.

Ms. T talked about her father who refused to eat in the last stage of his life in the third session. In response, Ms. Q said, "It's hard for those who are watching. When you are too sad, you can't cry". Ms. T had a new realization: "Oh, that may be true".

The second phase is the Phase of Starting Participation. The turning point from the previous period was the realization of events due to a series of concrete proposals from participants. As it activated their sense of participation, I named this period the "Phase of starting participation".

Regarding "creation of place", an exchange meeting between university students and seniors was held at the suggestion of participants. The event consisted of a World Café on "the difference between past and present common sense" and a card game on views of life and death called "Moshibana Game", which is a Japanese translation of the "Go Wish Card" that originated in the United States, was played. Subsequently, the participants commented that they felt generational differences in views on marriage, family, and work in the World Café, but not in the card game. Some participants commented about the card game, "only in these places can you play this game" (5R), and "if I were in such a situation, I would not be able to play it because it is too true" (5T). The significance of talking about death in a hypothetical situation was highly appreciated.

There was a comment about the theme setting. One participant said, "The themes are getting tougher and tougher each time, so sometimes I would like to do a fun theme. For example, »What do you want to wear when you die?« Such as a hula dance costume" (6A). This was followed by the statements, "You just need to write it down yourself" (6Q), "No, it's interesting to talk about it together" (6A). Cheerful and fun themes were then proposed. Regarding the "dialogue on death", illness announcements were discussed in the sixth session.

> Q: I think the dignity of the last days is to be accepted by the patient himself. I don't want to be notified of my illness. The patient may know that the condition is gradually getting worse.
> A: Does not being notified mean that dignity is not protected?
> L: Yes, there is that way of thinking.
> N: Yes, that's true.
> Q: The patient will understand what that means if he sees his condition deteriorating day by day. Is it also a dignity to be informed?
> N: Hmmm. (Multiple voices saying "it's difficult!")

All of these reactions were in response to the comments of others. Although the opinions did not coalesce, each participant deepened his or her own thinking as they explored together.

The third phase is the Phase of Leading Activity. The distinction of this phase came from the participants frequently making specific proposals. It became clear that they wanted to enjoy the meeting. The leadership shifted to the participants and the author retreated to the background. I named this period the "Phase of leading activity."

As for "creation of place", when it was proposed to invite professionals to give lectures, there was some discussion as to whether it would fit the purpose of the Talking Group. Eventually, the event took place, and the participants were excited and had numerous questions. The project allowed them to reexamine the purpose and management policy of the Talking Group. The themes were chosen to be more positive and energetic. When asked about the desired theme at the tenth session, "What do you want to pass on to others out of what you have learned from your life?" was suggested. This proposal was ultimately adopted among comments such as "passing on to others, you can sort out what you have learned" (10N). When considering the theme of the exchange meeting, most participants wanted to discuss dreams of youth and the generation gap.

More evaluations of the Talking Group were made during this phase. Positive evaluations were "I could talk about death without reservation" (12R), "This is something I cannot talk to anyone close to me" (10P), and "I could hear stories that I cannot experience" (12H), all of which indicated appreciation of the significance of talking about death. In addition, the utility of adjusting one's thoughts was confirmed by such comments as, "Listening to other's opinions makes me reflect on my own life" (12Q). On the contrary, resistance, fear, and feelings of heaviness toward the theme were also expressed as negative evaluations: "It was like a study, and I felt resistance" (12U), "I was very scared at first" (12H), and "I sometimes thought it was heavy and painful" (12A). There were also comments such as "I want to study more about this at the citizen level" (12D) and "it is important to hold meetings with a specific theme" (12S), and the meetings were required to continue. In addition, a secondary effect was noted: "I am thankful to have more friends here". Regarding the "dialogue on death, "a good time to die" was discussed in the ninth session.

M: As this is a group that talks about happy endings, I think I should also learn about views of life and death: how I die, how I live, and when I die.
Q: I don't want to think about when I will die. What can I say, it's like life is going downhill. How healthily I can live is more important. Now, I am happy to live a healthy life without the care of others.
M: When you glance at death, you realize how important the present is...
Q: I think that is for God to decide. I feel that I can never decide such things and that my life is something that no one can know.
F: I think the best thing is to cherish each day and enjoy it.
S: It is a question of how to spend your old age in good health. I would be happy to

stay (mentally) healthy in an unhealthy state, and I might be unhappy to die in an unhealthy (mental) state.
T: Dying happily leads to living happily now, so I'm here to hear others' opinions about how to have a happy end.

Each participant cogitated on death as their own although they did not reach a consensus on their views on happiness, the relationship between life and death, and the significance of thinking about death.

In the tenth session, Ms. O, who had experienced a serious illness, talked about how she had changed from thinking she could die by the roadside to wanting to live. Ms. R agreed that her words were rooted in her experience. In the final session, Ms. D talked about positioning her life through the eyes of her children: "My children and I can be happy when they evaluate my life as a fun life" (12D).

DISCUSSION

This project created a place where participants talked about death without worry. There is a desire to "think about it" in society, but places for discussion and dialogue in a general sense are rare (Kashimoto, 2014). There has not been a public place where people can talk about death, which is something they want to think about but find difficult to discuss with close family and friends, so it would be significant that such a place has been created. The pre-established policy of the meetings was well followed, thus, allowing participants to feel comfortable with a safe space and sufficient time to talk about sensitive topics. Narratives about bereavement experiences were received with empathy. Koksvik and Richards (2021) stated that Death Café is a social and emotional space and that the subject matter of death enhances the affective bonds and expressivity within the group and satisfies human connection. This may have led to empathy at the Talking Group. The atmosphere of the café and an environment of equality let participants develop empathy through mutuality and emotional connection, and deepen their thinking through dialogue. Subsequently, the participants developed empathy and learned from each other. Equal and reciprocal personality exchanges were created in a place where psychological safety (Edmondson & Lei, 2014) was guaranteed, thereby allowing thinking to deepen through new ideas and dialogue.

The participants appreciated the card game and said that it was something that could only be played in such a place. To talk about death is to assume a hypothetical situation in the future, and games have facilitated this. Yamori (2007) uses games in his research on disaster prevention, focusing on the contingency that the unexpected can happen in games. Disasters and death are similar in the sense that they are future events, the difference being whether they are certain to occur.

Games can be a good opportunity for talking about inevitable death while recognizing the contingency. Furthermore, there are limits to using the acquisition of knowledge about death as a dialogue starter to arouse awareness of people indifferent to death. The contingency of the game could be used to lead to an endless hypothetical dialogue.

As long as we think of death as someone else's matter, we will not ponder on it. A sense of belonging promotes the provision of collective knowledge (Oldenburg, 1989). Although some participants joined this meeting without any intention of thinking about death, they developed a sense of belonging through interaction with others and became empowered to contemplate death through the benefit of common knowledge and activities. Sun et al. (2016) argued that action research is effective in fostering the proactiveness necessary to view disaster prevention and mitigation activities as "my matter". In this study, the proactive management method of action research may have enabled participants to think of death as "my matter".

I discuss the communal narrative of the meetings. Rappaport (1995) stated that people are empowered when they find a communal narrative that positively supports their story as communities, organizations, and individuals have their own stories and interact with each other. The participants were empowered through the experience of having their statements supported and positively evaluated at the Talking Group. A communal narrative was created when they talked about death as their own, based on their experiences and values in a place where they shared space and time with others. This aspect was expressed in the themes decided by the participants. While initially, they chose themes of concerns about death, which had strong passive and learning aspects, after the midpoint of the project, they chose more self-affirming topics. Additionally, concern for generations emerged as the project matured. From the second phase onward, the youth generation, including students, came into focus and intergenerational awareness became more pronounced. While acknowledging the heaviness associated with death, the participants sought brightness and fun in the themes and tried to gain new perspectives and share them with others. The shifting themes indicated that the collective narrative was oriented toward a shift from negative to positive alternatives. However, the possibility of a re-transition from positive to negative remained, which is an open-ended characteristic of narratives (Tagaki, 2022). The collective theme of the Talking Group would be the pursuit of a state of goodness (well-being) through a cyclical ascent between negative and positive.

Tagaki (2022) suggests that discussion generates imagination, uncertainty, and ambiguity, and furthermore, imagination can generate uncertainty, ambiguity, and new narratives. In the Talking Group, the card game encouraged discussion of assumptive worlds and helped participants use their imaginations to talk about the unknown of death and form a view of life and death. Imaginative narratives are

important to continue to update the formed view of life and death as circumstances change in the future.

Subsequently, I discuss the narratives of individual participants. Both external dialogues with the other and internal dialogue with the self were recognized in the project. In external dialogues, the participants felt empowered and thought that their experiences were affirmed when their statements were evaluated as "words you can say because you have experienced them". This response facilitated dialogue and enhanced its overall effectiveness. The participants explored difficult questions such as "at what age is it happy to die?" and "whether or not to be informed of your illness?" Consequently, they realized that they could clarify the outline of their lives by thinking about death, even if they could not obtain concrete answers. The differences in their views of life and death became clearer, and discussions about happiness and the meaning of life developed.

As for internal dialogues, it is said that thinking begins with surprise and is nurtured by dialogue and participation in the community (Kohno, 2019). When participants were exposed to new opinions, they were surprised and developed an internal dialogue with themselves to deepen their thinking. The topic of the age at which people are happy to die was discussed twice. In the second dialogue, it was not just a question of when to die, but also how to live, which showed deeper thinking. When the bereavement experience was reinterpreted, the participants underwent a transformation in their thinking as their individual opinions were placed in the context of the group through dialogue, and thus, given new meanings (Kohno, 2019). The new meaning-making led to what Phillips (2001) calls "the discovery of my own philosophy" (p. 51).

Over the course of the project, the participants began to think and speak about death as their own rather than someone else's. They realized that death was not something to be avoided but was always with them, and learned from each other the wisdom of living with death (Takenouchi, 2020). They shared the significance of living through to the end of life. In particular, the narrative that living joyfully until the end of one's life and being positively evaluated by one's children is happiness for both oneself and one's children was symbolic of the fun-oriented and generational consciousness of the communal narratives. When individual narratives were sublimated into communal narratives and interactions developed, the participants were energized by gaining their insights, making new discoveries, and adjusting their own ideas.

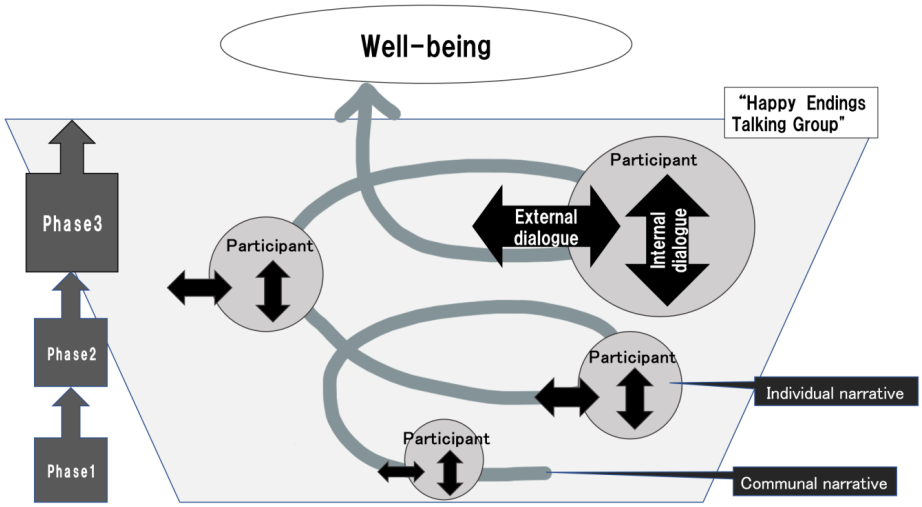
One of the changes in the narrative during the project was organic discussion. At the beginning of the project, the dialogue was one-off and unconnected but gradually became connected and philosophized in response to group contributions. This indicated that conversational communication (Morioka, 2018) co-generated by the individual and others occurred. Another change was the spread of empathy. Initially, empathy was confined to the speakers, but toward the end of the

meeting, the narratives were evaluated from a higher dimension, which everyone followed. Dialogue requires care for both the partners and the subject of thought, and one acquires a new story of oneself and understands oneself through that care (Takenouchi, 2016). In other words, empathy is not only something directed toward the other, but also toward an understanding of oneself. The spread of empathy in situations where death is talked about is significant. Because the narratives around death are sensitive and sometimes painful, making the narrator vulnerable. Aiming for community and individual well-being suggests an approach to what Kellehear (2005) calls a compassionate community.

Finally, I discuss the dynamics of individual and communal narratives. "Agency" and "communion" appear in dialogue as conflict between the individual and the group (Kohno, 2019). In the meeting, there were communality-oriented narratives that responded to and empathized with the narratives of others, and subjectivity-oriented narratives that asserted participants' own way of life. Oldenburg (1989) demonstrated that third-place interactions can bring about the perfect fusion of selfishness, to make oneself happy, and altruism to make others happy. In the meetings, positive attitudes such as cheerfulness and fun brought an equilibrium of "communion" and "agency" that transcended the conflict between individual and group. The participants' mutual learning and empathy through dialogue created a mutual narrative of the individual and the community, and that narrative was oriented toward well-being. McAdams et al. (1998) believed that generativity is positively correlated with life satisfaction and happiness, and a view of life and death supported by generativity may create new things that lead to the next generation, which, in turn, may bring a sense of well-being in the subjects of the current generation. Individual interviews conducted before and after this project also revealed that individuals' views of life and death were shifting toward well-being (Tomoi, 2022).

The dynamics of individual and communal narratives in the meeting are summarized in Figure 1. The dual dynamics demonstrate that participants pursued psychological well-being to live with death in the face of death anxiety and uncertainty, while the group underwent rich transformation through the closeness and positive exploration of death. At the beginning of the project, the participants' narratives were only emitted unilaterally, and the internal dialogue was dominant, with their thoughts proceeding quietly within their minds. Gradually, as discussions with others evolved and empathy grew, external dialogues emerged, and internal and external dialogues were balanced. The process was not linear but spiral. The transformation of each participant's narrative, in turn, transformed the communal narrative, and both sides empowered each other toward well-being. The fact that the participants wished to continue the project after it was over shows that forming views of life and death is an endless process.

Figure 1.
Dual dynamics of individual and communal narratives in the "Happy Endings Talking Group"



Source: Author's own study.

CONCLUSION

The creation of a safe and comfortable place to talk about death, which is often difficult and avoided even by family and friends, was a product of all the participants in the action research method. Thinking and talking about death as our own matter could make us aware of our inner views of life and death, and listening to others' views of life and death could help us modify them. The participants and their community were in a dual dynamic of interaction, and both narratives were transformed toward positive and psychological well-being. The participants felt joy in passing on what they had inherited to the succeeding generation. If the sense of inheritance acquired in the process of forming an individual's view of life and death is also achieved as a group narrative, it will foster a death-friendly momentum in the community and promote the realization of a "compassionate community" (Kellehear, 2005). Koksvik and Richards (2021) stated that increasing awareness of dying prompts one to make the most of one's life and that individuals and society as a whole would be better off if continuously reminded of and engaging with death. It appears to be a grand endeavor to make people aware of their own mortality in the context of intergenerational connections and to foster their own views of life and death in the context of their connections with others. However, a place to talk about death would be a step in this direction.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Future research requires a broader age range. Generationality is significant when considering death, as participants often referred to generations. However, sufficient intergenerational comparisons could not be made this time due to a lack of participation by young people. Death is not exclusive to the middle-aged and the elderly; youth must think about it as well. Long-term research is needed to see how views of life and death change over time in accordance with the life experiences of each individual. As the formation of one's view of life and death is an evolving process, I would like to continue this effort.

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TWORZENIE MIEJSCA DO ROZMOWY O ŚMIERCI W CELU KSZTAŁTOWANIA POGLĄDU NA ŻYCIE I ŚMIERĆ – BADANIA W DZIAŁANIU W SPOŁECZNOŚCI LOKALNEJ

Wprowadzenie: Poglądy na życie i śmierć stanowią podstawę codzienności dla osób u kresu życia do wyrażania swoich intencji dotyczących tego, gdzie i jak chcą spędzić swój czas, a dla osób zdrowych są podstawą życia pełnią życia.
Cel badań: Dialog w społeczności byłby skuteczny w pomaganiu mieszkańcom społeczności lokalnej w kształtowaniu poglądów na życie i śmierć. Badanie to miało na celu stworzenie miejsca, w którym zdrowi mieszkańcy mogliby rozmawiać o śmierci i kształtować poglądy na życie i śmierć.
Metoda badań: Badanie zostało przeprowadzone przy użyciu metody badanie w działaniu. Mieszkańcy badanej społeczności niezaznajomieni ze śmiercią spotykali się i rozmawiali na wyznaczony przez siebie temat związany z życiem i śmiercią. Spotkania odbywały się co miesiąc przez rok. Za każdym razem uczestniczyło w nich kilkanaście osób. Notatki ze spotkań poddano analizie jakościowej.
Wyniki: W społeczności lokalnej stworzono bezpieczne miejsce do dzielenia się czasem i przestrzenią. Proces tworzenia miejsca został podzielony na trzy fazy: fazę zwiększania zainteresowania, fazę inicjowania uczestnictwa i fazę aktywności wiodącej, koncentrując się na temacie dialogu, świadomości uczestników i równowadze między autorem a uczestnikami.

Wnioski: Uczestnicy badań pogłębili swoje przemyślenia na temat śmierci poprzez wewnętrzne i zewnętrzne dialogi i ukształtowali swoje unikalne poglądy na życie i śmierć, jednocześnie dążąc do dobrostanu psychicznego. Grupa przyjęła dialog z empatią, tworząc zbiorową narrację o śmierci, która rekurencyjnie wzmacniała uczestników. Potwierdzono podwójną dynamikę odkrywania śmierci zarówno indywidualnie, jak i zbiorowo.

Słowa kluczowe: poglądy na życie i śmierć, badania w działaniu, dialog, narracja, mieszkańcy społeczności lokalnej, tworzenie miejsca