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Home-School Collaboration for Adolescents with Poor Wellbeing: A Qualitative Study of Parents' Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Semi-structured interviews of three fathers and nine mothers (aged 35–50) explore how parents experienced interacting with school personnel concerning their child's wellbeing (aged 11–17). Through a thematic narrative analysis, two contrasting, intertwined narratives (collaboration and non-collaboration) were constructed. When characterized by appreciation, mutuality, and dynamics, interaction (collaboration) has the capacity to promote positive development and empower parents. Conversely, when characterized by rejection, neglect, and stagnation, interaction (non-collaboration) might impair development and leave parents in despair. To establish and maintain constructive home-school collaboration, we recommend a family-centered approach that addresses adolescents' needs and acknowledges parents' perspectives.

Keywords: *wellbeing, home–school collaboration, adolescents, parents*

Introduction

Although most Danish adolescents thrive and flourish, a large minority experience poor wellbeing (Ottosen et al., 2018). Similar to the trend in other Western countries (cf. Cavallo et al., 2015), a general decline in life satisfaction among Danish adolescents has been observed (Due et al., 2014; Ottosen et al., 2018; Rasmussen et al., 2019). For adolescents, mental health problems and poor wellbeing have direct adverse effects on

their academic achievement (DeSocio & Hootman, 2004), social relations, and physical health (Murphy & Fonagy, 2013), and may also impact their educational attainment and employment in young adulthood (Hale & Viner, 2018; Veldman, Reijneveld, Ortiz, & Verhulst, 2015). Experiencing mental health problems and poor wellbeing in adolescence may thus have lifelong implications if not addressed in the school setting.

Recent meta-analyses indicate that home-school collaboration has a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing among school-age children, including social-behavioral competence (Sheridan, Smith, Kim, Beretvas, & Park, 2019; Smith, Sheridan, Kim, Park, & Beretvas, 2019), and social and emotional adjustment (Barger, Kim, Kuncel, & Pomerantz, 2019). By accommodating the need for early intervention (Veldman, Reijneveld, Verhulst, Ortiz, & Bültmann, 2017), and enabling children to develop their academic skills (Hill & Craft, 2003), home-school collaboration may counter both direct and long-term implications of mental health problems and poor wellbeing in adolescence.

Multiple barriers to collaboration exist, making effective home-school collaboration challenging to achieve (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Research shows that while resourceful parents often comply with school personnel's expectations of how parents should engage in home-school collaboration, less resourceful parents may have difficulty fulfilling these expectations (Dannesboe, Kryger, Palludan, & Ravn, 2014). Cultural capital discrepancies have furthermore caused parents to feel alienated and intimidated (Bæck, 2005), and feelings of pressure and parental inadequacy have evolved from discord within parenting ideals (Akselvoll, 2016). Also, parents' experiences of collaborating with school personnel appear to be impeded by a lack of understanding (Byrne et al., 2008), leaving parents feeling powerless, disempowered, alienated, and unwelcome (Tucker, 2009).

Parents recognize home-school collaboration as vital for supporting their children's relational skills, especially among languishing youth (Krane & Klevan, 2019). Both parents and practitioners need to invest time and recognize that effective partnership is a two-way process that requires engagement and dialogue (Kambouri et al., 2022). Notwithstanding, home-school collaboration gradually recedes during middle-school years and may deteriorate even further (Smith, Reinke, Herman, & Huang, 2019), despite being equally effective across grades in improving mental health outcomes (Sheridan et al., 2019). Therefore, identifying ways to enhance home-school collaboration during the middle-school years could be of great importance (Smith et al., 2019). In this perspective, parents' experiences are essential to explore as they hold insights into the perceived challenges (Smith et al., 2019).

This study aimed to explore parents' experiences of home-school collaboration for adolescents with poor wellbeing and explored the following research questions: What characterizes parents' narratives on interacting with school personnel concerning their child's languishing? From parents' perspectives, what constitutes constructive interaction (collaboration) – and what does not (non-collaboration)? And finally, how do narratives on collaboration and non-collaboration relate to each other?

Informed by Kim and Sheridan's (2015) theoretical model of family-school connections, we defined home-school collaboration as parents' and school personnel's mutual engagement in children's learning processes and their efforts to support children's behavioral, social, and emotional development. Through structural activities (e.g., parents' evening meetings) within a relational approach characterized by dialogue, trust, mutual goals, and collaborative efforts to solve problems, parents and school personnel can collaborate in ways that are responsive to family values, children's developmental needs, and based on the competencies and interests of both (Kim & Sheridan, 2015). In line with the model's orientation towards behavioral, emotional, and social developmental outcomes, we defined poor wellbeing as a continuum of issues that reflected negative affective states and low psychological and social functioning (Keyes, 2002).

Methodology

Subsection 1: Study Design

To explore parents' experiences and situate these within a broader social context, thereby taking account of the interactional nature of home-school collaboration, this study was inspired by a symbolic interactionist epistemology and a narrative approach to data collection and analysis.

In line with the research aim and research questions, the symbolic interactionist epistemology of Herbert Blumer provided us with a theoretical frame of reference to explore and understand individuals (parents) in their interaction with others (school personnel) (Handberg, Thorne, Midtgaard, Nielsen, & Lomborg, 2015). Inspired by the narrative turn in contemporary symbolic interactionism (i.e., the emphasis on the reflexive and situated nature of experience (Denzin, 2004)), we chose to combine symbolic interactionism with narrative methods. This implied exploring *representations* of experience (in this study parents' narratives) through representational practices (interviewing and storytelling) (Denzin, 2004). Although different representational practices exist (Denzin, 2004), we opted for narrative interviews as the primary empirical approach, because interviews are useful to explore personal interpretations (Carter & Alvardo, 2018). Overall, we found the theoretical context for studying narratives (Riessman, 1993) to resonate well with a symbolic interactionist epistemology as the theory informing our methods. We likewise recognized that individuals, when performing narratives, would present their experiences, and in so doing, the meaning of such experiences would shift in the process of social interaction (Riessman, 1993).

Theoretical Frame of Reference

Blumer's (1969) basic premises presume: (premise 1) that individuals act towards material, social, or metaphysical objects (i.e., things, actions, and other individuals) based on the meanings that these have for them; (premise 2) that meanings of objects arise from individuals' interaction with others; and (premise 3) that individuals

operate in and modify these meanings through interpretive processes. Based on these premises, we assumed that the meanings that home–school collaboration had for parents were products of intrapersonal processes (e.g., interpretation, premise 3) as well as socially situated (e.g., shaped by their previous interaction with school personnel, premise 2), and that parents would engage in this collaboration dependent on these meanings (premise 1).

From a symbolic interactionist view, narratives represent objects whose meanings arise from the joint action between those telling (e.g., parents) or coaxing (Plummer, 1990). In our case, we expected parents to align their telling to the coaxing of the first author by pointing out their experiences of collaborating with school personnel, and by revising (premise 3) the socially mediated meanings (premise 2) that such experiences had for them (premise 1).

Considering that symbolic interactionism is methodologically oriented towards the empirical world, Blumer's basic premises dictate that insight into human society and conduct (e.g., home–school collaboration) can be gained from investigating objects (e.g., interaction with school personnel) from the perspectives of those explored (e.g., parents) (Blumer, 1969). In this view, exploring parents' experiences would also produce insight into the general challenges and potentials of home–school collaboration for languishing youths.

Subsection 2: Participants and Settings
Sampling Strategy
A purposeful sampling strategy proposed by Creswell (2013) was applied, seeking maximum variation in the sample. Guided by the concept of information power (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016), we considered a sample size of 12 participants appropriate when accounting for our study aim and applied methods, including our efforts to enhance dialogue by informing interview guide development through participant observations.

Inclusion Criteria Participants
Parents with an ongoing or recent collaboration with school personnel concerning their child's wellbeing were included. Parents represented variations in socioeconomic status, their child's age, and the nature of poor wellbeing, all of which are factors that may impact home–school collaboration (Epstein, 1995; Inoa, 2017; McKenna & Millen, 2013) and parents' perceptions (Cameron & Kovac, 2017; Jourdan, Pironom, Simar, & Sormunen, 2018; Sormunen, Tossavainen, & Turunen, 2011).

Recruitment Procedure
Four public schools from one municipality were selected and contacted in close collaboration with the municipality's local education authority. These schools represented variations in size, socioeconomics, and location. Contact with parents eligible for inclusion was conveyed via welfare coordinators, who were informed orally and in

writing about the recruitment procedure. To obtain maximum variation, we encouraged welfare coordinators to contact parents with socioeconomically diverse backgrounds, with whom they considered their collaboration to range from unproblematic to conflictual. Furthermore, welfare coordinators were asked to ensure that the children's issues reflected various negative affective states and low psychological and social functioning levels following Keyes' (2002) definition. To ensure control of the recruitment process, welfare coordinators and the first author discussed parents' eligibility before the first contact. When deemed eligible, welfare coordinators contacted parents and obtained their informed consent to be contacted by phone by the first author. Here, the first author informed parents about the study, ensured that they participated voluntarily, and planned a time and place for the interviews.

Included Participants

Three fathers and nine mothers between 35–50 years of age were included (see Appendix for an overview). All but one were employed (n = 11). Parents had completed either primary and lower secondary education (n = 4), a bachelor's degree (n = 4), vocational education (n = 3), or a master's degree (n = 1). The children (eight boys and four girls) were 11–17 years of age and represented various present or former issues of negative affective states, low psychological and social functioning, or a combination of these. A minority of the adolescents were also diagnosed with mental, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental disorders, such as dyslexia, anxiety, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. All were or had earlier been subject to various difficulties, such as low self-worth, self-harm, working memory deficit, school refusal behavior, or bullying.

Subsection 3: Data Collection and Analysis
Data Collection

Participant observations. Prior to interviews, the first author undertook participant observations for seven workdays during a 9-week period at five public schools to observe the daily interactions among parents, adolescents, and school personnel. One welfare coordinator[1] from each school (n = 5) was interviewed informally about their efforts to promote students' mental health and wellbeing. Field notes provided insight into the interpersonal and organizational contexts of home-school collaboration and were used to frame the interview guide.

Interviews. Twelve individual, semi-structured interviews with three fathers and nine mothers were carried out. Interviews were recorded digitally and lasted between 79 and 276 minutes (approximately 2 hours on average). Davidson's (2003) principles for conducting narrative interviews guided the questioning technique used, involving
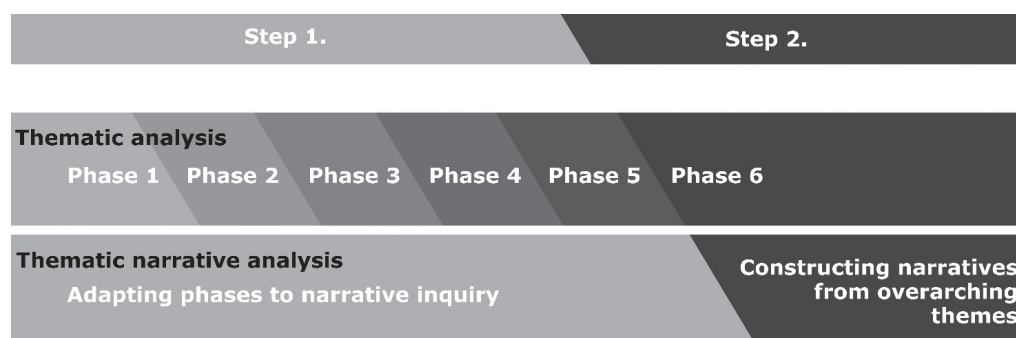
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1 Welfare coordinators (in Danish: *Trivselspersoner*) are resource persons for students, parents, and school personnel. In collaboration with inclusion counsellors, social workers, school nurses, and psychologists, welfare coordinators are expected to coordinate, manage, and execute schools' efforts to prevent poor wellbeing among students.

open-ended, specific, and detailed questions phrased in participants' language. This included the utilization of question prompts, such as *"You mentioned... then what happened... can you tell me more about that".* The interview guide (see Appendix) covered themes exploring how parents perceived home–school collaboration, how their everyday lives were altered because of their child's languishing, and whom, if anyone, they considered to be their social support networks. Moreover, the interview guide was structured by a circular temporal organization from past to present to imply temporality, as this was thought to elicit the parents' accounts by enabling them to engage narratively in the interview. The interviewer (first author) sought to reformulate questions and parents' responses to obtain a mutual understanding of the shared meaning (Mishler, 1991). Interviews were conducted in contexts chosen by participants and carried out in parents' homes (*n* = 9), first author's workplace (*n* = 2), or parent's workplace (*n* = 1). In three interviews, partners were present. Data were collected from January to June 2019.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006) was applied in the analysis of field notes, resulting in themes that informed interview guide development. Given that integrated analytic strategies are appropriate for revealing different interpretive scopes (Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, & Townsend, 2010), we conducted a narrative thematic analysis in two steps, adapting Riessman's (2008) narrative approach with Braun and Clarke's six phases (2006) (see Figure 1). Through an inductive, semantic, and data-driven thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), overarching themes were identified (Step 1 = phases 1-5). Hereafter, two main narratives were constructed through further synthesizing (Step 2 = phase 6). During the analysis, the first and the last author discussed the identified themes and the constructed narratives to ensure their consistency, transparency, and connection with the data material. Lastly, the main narratives were discussed with the third author.

Step 1. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and checked back against the audio files to ensure their accuracy (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To accommodate discrepancy between thematic and narrative strategies of analysis (i.e., the difference in theorizing within

| Step 1. | | | | | Step 2. |

Thematic analysis
Phase 1　Phase 2　Phase 3　Phase 4　Phase 5　Phase 6

Thematic narrative analysis
Adapting phases to narrative inquiry　　Constructing narratives from overarching themes

Figure 1: Integrated thematic and thematic narrative strategy of analysis.

versus across the data items (Braun & Clarke, 2006), we followed a process of initial theorizing within each transcript by one across. Each transcript was thus initially read, re-read, coded, and thematized separately to maintain its integrity. Subsequently, the initial codes and themes were used to formulate overarching themes across interviews through repeated processes of collating, coding, re-coding, and continuous thematizing (phases 1-5).

Step 2. Inspired by thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008), narratives were constructed based on the overarching themes identified in Step 1. This process resulted in two main narratives that embodied parents' experiences: *Narrative 1. Collaboration: appreciation and mutuality,* and *Narrative 2. Non-collaboration: rejection and neglect* (see Figure 2 for the relation between main narratives and themes).
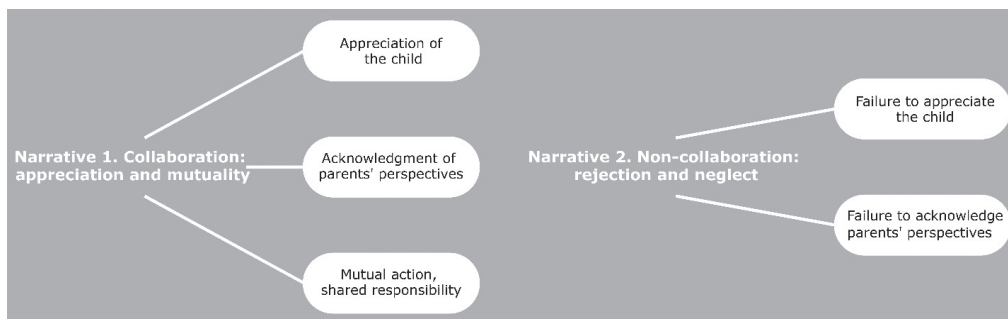
Figure 2: Code trees on main narratives on collaboration and non-collaboration.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation 2016/679) and the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). Thus, a record of processing activities was filed in an internal system (file number 2019-899/10-0010). Also, participants were informed orally and in writing, and their written consent was obtained prior to their participation. Since this study did not include trials involving liveborn human individuals or biological material, it was not possible to seek authority approval from The National Committee on Health Research Ethics according to the Danish Act on Research Ethics Review of Health Research Projects (LBK 1083 15/09/2017). This study, therefore, was solely based on informed consent. To preserve confidentiality and privacy, we changed the names of locations and participants, including the names of the characters appearing in parents' narratives (children and school personnel). Rather than presenting parents' narratives separately, we synthesized their individual narratives into two main narratives that emphasized the common features of parents' experiences. When presenting these main narratives, we carefully selected exemplar quotes and curated these (e.g., by leaving out identifiable features of a story) to prevent concrete experiences to be traced back to specific individuals.

Results

Narrative 1. Collaboration: appreciation and mutuality encompassed parents' experiences of inclusiveness and understanding; adequate action to meet their child's difficulties and needs; acknowledgment of their perspectives; their child's positive emotions and development; and feelings of relief, energy, and confidence.

Narrative 2. Non-collaboration: rejection and neglect encompassed parents' experiences of non-inclusive perceptions and lack of understanding; intentional or unintentional negligence of their child's difficulties and needs; child's distress; and feelings of insignificance, worthlessness, and mistrust.

Both main narratives were present across interviews, yet variations were seen in their representation and dominance. The main narratives appeared intrinsically intertwined. When school personnel's action was perceived as decisive, persevering, and genuine—the failure of their actions aside—parents experienced interaction as *collaboration.* In contrast, when parents felt that school personnel did not act despite recognizing their child's difficulties and needs, they experienced interaction as *non-collaboration.* Consequently, the absence of action formed the intersection between the two main narratives outlined as either dynamic (collaboration) or stagnant (non-collaboration) (see Figure 3).
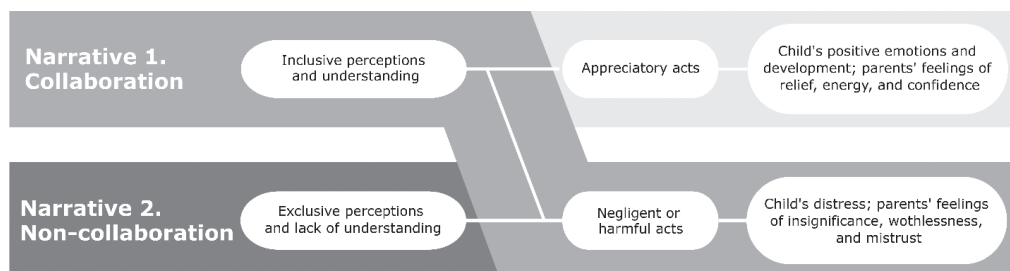
Figure 3: Intersection between main narratives.

Narrative 1. Collaboration: Appreciation and Mutuality
Appreciation of the Child

Parents' experiences of school personnel's appreciation of their child were characterized by inclusive perceptions as well as sympathy and responsiveness concerning their child's needs. Despite the challenges that school personnel faced due to the child's difficulties, parents felt that their child was neither blamed nor perceived as the cause of problems. Instead, the school personnel held an inclusive and positive picture of him or her:

> He [the welfare coordinator] knows what he [Nor] is going through … he can see [what Nor needs], and he has had some really good conversations … with Nor … . (Ditte, Nor's mother)

Parents expressed how school personnel recognized their child's academic, vocational, and personal competence and went to great lengths to offer solutions within their range of possibilities —sometimes even beyond— which parents perceived as efforts to bend the rules to accommodate their child. Also, parents experienced that school personnel were responsive to their child's perspective and demonstrated confidence, trust, and genuine interest in him or her:

> … that he feels, Nikolaj, that they want him—it just means everything, right, and helps build up his self-confidence again … He did not believe that he could do anything, right. … The mere fact that [the welfare coordinator] step by step rebuilds him and praises him all the time, right, for the small things he has shown, right—that is just great … . (Lene, Nikolaj's mother)

Often, the school personnel's sympathy for and efforts to meet the child's needs fostered parents' confidence in the collaboration and gave rise to feelings of relief, as school personnel's efforts promoted their child's development and positive emotions:

> He [the welfare coordinator] couldn't either see her in those elective courses. And the fact that he … was willing to say, "*Then we will try it her way*". …that has been great, and it has also meant a lot for Alberte at home … . Well, it has given her some more peace and more joy …, well, it … has made much more sense to her. (Agnes, Alberte's mother)

Acknowledgment of Parents' Perspectives

Parents felt that they were met with appreciation, helpfulness, and involvement. They expressed how school personnel accommodated their needs and sought to involve them by making contact and sharing information. Furthermore, the parents expressed how they appreciated the school personnel's responsiveness to their perspectives on the efforts to accommodate their child's needs:

> We are allowed, like, to say, "*Well, damn it, I don't agree with this*". … we [can] make all these agreements, but Johannes must be able to bloody keep them … so it might not be that important with these five [agreements] … . But it is allowed to say so. And it is heard, right. (Vinni, Johannes' mother)

Parents voiced how being acknowledged for one's perspective fostered their relief and energy. They told how these acts of appreciation fostered their confidence in the parental role and the school personnel with whom they collaborated:

> … it was really nice having that feeling of being listened to, then I actually feel like coming to her [the school personnel] with these problems instead of thinking, "*Well the effort is not worth the expense because they will not listen to me*". (Agnes, Alberte's mother)

Mutual Action, Shared Responsibility

Parents typically perceived the nature of their contact with school personnel as a mutual dialogue that constituted the basis for their mutual efforts to meet the child's difficulties and needs. By pursuing mutual ends (e.g., supporting the child's thriving) and acknowledging their part in the difficulty that the child experienced (e.g., recognizing how this was partly due to their inadequacy to meet his or her needs), parents felt that school personnel assumed responsibility. This shared responsibility gave rise to parents' feelings that help was at hand, and that their family's situation was recognized by others. Also, it fostered their confidence in collaboration and the competence of the school personnel with whom they collaborated:

> ... when they ask, it is with a genuine curiosity as to whether "*... can we solve this problem?*", you know, ... [I am] very impressed by that. ... So it does matter, again, it turns into security and confidence, even though you feel frustrated because your child cannot honor these things [school personnel's efforts to meet her needs]. Nevertheless, it makes you feel confident because they are doing bloody everything they can, right. (Lars, Nynne's father)

Narrative 2. Non–Collaboration: Rejection and Neglect
Failure to Appreciate the Child

Parents' experiences of the school personnel's failure to appreciate their child were characterized by non-inclusive perceptions, lack of understanding, intentional or unintentional negligence of the child's difficulties and needs, and the distress that he or she felt when his or her difficulties and needs were neither recognized nor reacted to. In some cases, school personnel's failure to appreciate the child became evident to the parents through their non-inclusive perceptions. Thus, some parents voiced how their child was objectified or stigmatized as one with special needs. Also, the school personnel were found to be aware of only the shortcomings of the child, whom they considered uncooperative, unreliable, "a bad character," "a bully," "a problem," or, simply, "a liability":

> They were very negative toward David in the beginning. "*Well, he did not bother to keep up [with the class], and he was just tiresome, and he was just sitting in a corner with his back to [the class]*" ... . But it is also difficult for them to get a correct picture of David, when they perceived him negatively from the start, because, well, he was just—really what it began with was that David was just an irritation in school, ... because he was just a liability. (Ole, David's father)

Parents also shared experiences of school personnel's failure to meet their child's difficulties and needs through negligent, harmful, or inadequate actions, as well as their mistrust, problematization, and displacement of responsibility. In most cases, the school personnel's negative perceptions of the child were illustrated through their lack of confidence, rejecting what the child said as *lies,* or showing little faith in what

he or she had to say. Parents felt that their child was unacceptably and unjustly treated, and his or her needs neglected because school personnel failed to act or acted inadequately, and failed to recognize their part in the child's languishing. By blaming the child for his or her difficulty, parents felt that school personnel displaced responsibility to their child, thereby problematizing him or her:

> ... and when I actually contacted the teachers regarding that episode, then I was actually told that it was Thor's own fault— that he had provoked [it]. Despite it being outright violence. (Louise, Thor's mother)

Individualized solutions to the situation sometimes accompanied these acts of intentional and unintentional problematizing. That is, in the case of bullying, parents felt that their child was expected to change or be taken out of class. These actions resulted in the child being de-normalized, and his or her difficulties individualized:

> But still, I felt that we were very much alone at that point, ... but then that agreement with [the welfare coordinator] was established and [the] conversations [started]. ... So I cannot say ... that we have been totally cut off from any [help]. But that is the thing; the focus was directed towards him [Felix] *[Merle lowers her voice]* in isolation, I think − that is how I feel. (Merle, Felix's mother)

School personnel's lack of understanding and failure to meet the child's needs were, in some cases, accompanied by the child's feelings of betrayal and distress:

> ... well, and then they had midterm examinations. ... And she [Lina] did not understand the assignment. ... And she asked for help several times. So, at the end she wrote to me, "*Now they have given up on me*". ... Then she said, "*They cannot do this [to me]*". (Mia, Lina's mother)

Failure to Acknowledge Parents' Perspectives
Parents' experiences of school personnel's failure to acknowledge their perspectives were characterized by school personnel's lack of responsiveness, acts of blame, and efforts to displace responsibility. Parents reported that they felt disregarded, because school personnel neither listened nor responded to their inquiries and requests regarding their child and the situation:

> ... I do hear what they say, and I will not deny it [the negative things] at all because I have not been there, so it is not because I want to disagree ... that these things are as they are and so on, ... and I say, "*But we must also hear the whole story*", because there are some things that seem to work ... . I needed to let them know that. ... I felt, perhaps, at some of the first meetings that [my perspective] ... was ignored a bit. (Daniel, Luna's father)

Some parents additionally voiced how school personnel did not attempt to involve them nor meet their expectations. School personnel's failure to respect appointments was also apparent as parents reported that numerous appointments were broken:

> ... I just think that is how you react as a parent, right, ... [when teachers are saying], "*Well, you have not done what we agreed to*", um-um, [then] I would like to ask, "*Did you then do in math class what we agreed should be done?*", because that is definitely what I heard from Johannes when he came home from school and told me that you didn't do what we had agreed on. (Vinni, Johannes' mother)

Moreover, parents felt that they were held responsible for doing what they regarded as the school personnel's duties, such as informing teachers, resolving the child's conflicts with school personnel, and contacting other parents regarding the bullying of their child. Furthermore, parents felt blamed for acting in ways harmful to their child, for not taking action needed to accommodate his or her needs, or for causing his or her difficulty by failing to meet their parental responsibilities:

> Well, ... that is what you experience as a parent; that ... they [the school personnel] look at us like it [Nikolaj's difficulties] is our fault, right. (Lene, Nikolaj's mother)

School personnel's failure to acknowledge parents gave rise to feelings of insignificance and worthlessness as parents felt rejected, unwanted, exposed, humiliated, and that their family's situation was overlooked and unimportant. Such non-appreciatory action fostered powerlessness, relinquishment, and doubt, gave rise to self-images of being "overprotective" or "stupid," and caused parents to lose confidence in the collaboration itself:

> ... we have, somewhere or other, in some situations lost the feeling ... that it [the collaboration and the situation] could be, like, great. And [we have] actually thought, "*Well, ... then we must do something ourselves*". ... not at any time [after a meeting at Aske's school] have we really felt that ... *[Lykke claps her hands]* "*Now something is happening*". ... Most times it has been a bit of a dull experience. (Lykke, Aske's mother)

Discussion

During the analysis of parents' experiences, we constructed two contrasting, intertwined narratives. The main narrative on collaboration contributes to a deeper understanding of how healthy home-school collaboration can be achieved and maintained through appreciation, mutuality, and action. When these factors are addressed during home-school collaboration, this will, according to our findings, contribute to adolescents' development and empower parents with relief, security, and confidence. Conversely, the main narrative on non-collaboration shows that when these factors are left unattended, the relationship between parents and school personnel becomes strained, and may deteriorate to a degree where collaboration is absent or adversarial. In such cases, languishing youth and their families are not only excluded from support, but may also suffer due to the rejection and neglect they experience.

Also, the intertwining of contrasting narratives reveals that establishing and maintaining healthy home-school collaboration are complex processes. In our study, the main narratives on collaboration and non-collaboration intersected (see Figure 3) when parents felt that their relationship with school personnel turned unhealthy and stagnant, that is their child's difficulties and needs were recognized but not reacted to. This intersection reveals that constructive home-school collaboration is vulnerable, in the sense that it requires continuous attention from school personnel once established. From parents' perspectives, it is evident that this attention should involve recognizing and subsequently seeking to accommodate children's difficulties and needs. However, if school personnel are to do so, this will require time, resources, and competence.

The constructed narratives show how parents experience home-school collaboration in terms of how school personnel acknowledge or discard their perspectives, and appreciate or fail to appreciate their child. In this sense, our findings reflect former research showing that parents' experiences of collaboration are influenced by the quality of interaction with school personnel (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018), as well as school personnel's ability to understand the child's difficulties and needs (Byrne et al., 2008).

Parents experienced healthy collaboration as school personnel's genuine interest in their child and their efforts to relate to him or her in an appreciatory (sympathetic, inclusive, and responsive) way. Hence, our results support previous studies reporting how parents value school personnel's honest concern (West, Miller, & Moate, 2017), and in-depth knowledge of and abilities to relate to the child when collaborating (Miller et al., 2009). Contrary to the inclusiveness characteristic of constructive collaboration, the parents in our study viewed non-collaboration as school personnel's individualization of their child's difficulties and needs. Research in special education has shown that individualization is conditioned by an interplay of agencies and structural conditions (Røn Larsen, 2013). In line with this, the current Danish Public School Act has been said to promote interventions targeting the individual level (Røn Larsen, 2013). This may also apply to the observed tendency toward the individualization of poor wellbeing within mainstream education.

Acknowledging (listening to and accommodating) parents' perspectives when interacting was paramount in order to establish what parents perceived as healthy collaboration. Thus, our findings reflect previous studies reporting that school personnel's respect for parents' perspectives (i.e., their knowledge of their child's challenges) is pivotal to collaborating effectively (Krane & Klevan, 2019). In addition, research shows that school personnel's unconditional acceptance, tolerance, and authentic listening are essential aspects of feeling supported (West et al., 2017). Contrary to the acknowledgment characteristic of constructive collaboration, parents described non-collaboration in terms of not being recognized for their perspectives nor included in crucial aspects of their child's wellbeing. Consistent with previous research (Tucker, 2009), this lack of interest caused parents to feel insignificant and worthless. Parental

mental health (Newland, 2015) and self-efficacy (Albanese, Russo, & Geller, 2019) are foundational for child wellbeing. Therefore, when parents are disempowered through collaboration, adolescents' development may be affected negatively.

In opposition to the shared responsibility characteristic of constructive collaboration, parents in our study felt blamed for their child's difficulties, and responsible for what they regarded as school personnel's responsibilities. Previously, schools have been found to release themselves from social responsibility (e.g., wellbeing) by attributing children's relational issues to a lack of responsive parenting, thereby identifying these issues to be parental matters (Hein, 2013). These efforts to displace responsibility may leave parents to handle their child's difficulties by themselves. This may negatively affect children's development, considering that a lack of home-school collaboration hinders the possibility of supporting adolescents, thus precluding them from the benefits that would be available otherwise (Clarke, Sheridan, & Woods, 2009).

Although our findings show that parents' experiences reflect primarily their interpersonal relations with school personnel, research reveals that principals may be determining the culture for home-school engagement (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). Hence, parents' experiences can be explained by broader organizational features restricting school personnel's agency in collaboration. Taken together, this calls for principals to recognize their role in shaping home-school collaboration. This includes considering how their implementation of school culture (e.g., prioritization and allocation of funds) may enable (or disable) school personnel to achieve healthy home-school collaboration.

Strengths and Limitations

The individual interviews enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the struggles that parents experience when collaborating with school personnel concerning their child's wellbeing. Although partners' presence during interviews was unintentional, we observed that their attendance led participants to broaden their experiences. Also, the symbolic interactionist epistemology equipped us with a theoretical frame of reference suitable for investigating home-school collaboration through parents' experiences. Moreover, the narrative approach to analysis (Riessman, 2008) provided us with a tool to capture the two-sidedness of parents' experiences of home-school collaboration and how vulnerable and complex this relationship can be.

Included participants were fairly similar with respect to educational level and employment status. Since parents' socioeconomic status may affect their satisfaction with home-school collaboration (Jourdan et al., 2018), this lack of variation in our sample may affect the transferability of findings, considering the intrinsic relationship between validity (intern) and sampling in qualitative studies (Malterud et al., 2016). During sampling, we did not consider that parents from minority groups may face distinct challenges in home-school collaboration, such as language barriers

(Antony-Newman, 2019). Hence, our findings reflect primarily mid-income parents with a Danish ethnic background.

Regardless of the efforts to ensure parents' eligibility, the employed recruitment procedure left the authors with limited control over the recruitment process. Accordingly, the welfare coordinators may unintentionally have contacted parents with whom they found collaboration successful. To address this risk, we emphasized to the welfare coordinators that they should also recruit parents with whom collaboration was considered complicated or challenging. Although no parents spoke of collaboration with school personnel as unambiguously conflictual, many talked about ambivalent and complex engagement, indicating that recruitment procedure issues were not pronounced. During the recruitment process, the relationship between parents and welfare coordinators might have caused parents to feel obliged to participate, and their possible incentives to maintain healthy relationships may have distorted how they expressed their experiences. To counter these issues, we complied with ethical guidelines (World Medical Association, 2013), ensuring that parents were informed and understood that participation was voluntary and that no information would be passed on to the school.

Implications for Research

Both main narratives reveal that parents' experiences of home-school collaboration are dependent upon how school personnel relate to them and their children. Former research has shown that children may, as they mature during adolescence, redefine interactions within and between family and school (Downer & Myers, 2009). Specifically, the dynamics between balancing care needs and demands following children's transition from child to adulthood justify flexible collaboration between parents, school personnel, and adolescents (Krane & Klevan, 2019). Taken together, this calls for future research that investigates home-school collaboration as a tripartite rather than a bilateral relationship. Also, this suggests that family-centered interventions that recognize both adolescents and parents as active partners in home-school collaboration are to be further developed. The CAFE model supporting the development of parent-practitioner partnership (Kambouri et al., 2022) could thus be relevant to adapt to school settings, encouraging higher quality in childhood development and education.

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Appendix

Table 1: Interview guide

Briefing	Introduction to the study aim, purpose and content of the interview, as well as written informed consent.
Initial questions	Can you tell something about yourself?
	Perhaps you can tell me something about your family?
	Can you tell me something about the reason for your contact with the school?
Questions regarding home-school collaboration, everyday life, and social support	Perhaps you can start by telling me a little about the home-school collaboration concerning [name of the child]?
	Please tell me a little about how your collaboration started [use the term that the parent uses] – perhaps you remember how the school handled that [name of the adolescent] did not feel well/was sad/had difficulties?
	What have you experienced since [use the term that the parent uses] – what did you experience after [the situation(s) that the parent tells in relation to the previous questions]?
	Can you tell me a little about how you experience collaboration with the school [use the term that the parent uses] now?
	Perhaps you remember how the home-school collaboration [use the term that the parent uses] was before [name of the adolescent] did not feel well/felt sad/had difficulties – can you tell me about how you experienced collaboration [use the term that the parent uses] back then?
	First, I would like to hear what comes to your mind when I say support. Maybe you can try to put into words what you consider as support – do you, e.g., think of it as being helpful to have someone to talk to, someone to…?
	Can you tell me who supports you in your everyday life with [name of the child]?
Debriefing	Is there anything that I have not asked you about that you would like to tell me?
	Is there anything that you would like to elaborate on?
	Now the recorders are turned off. How has it been to share your experiences and to put them into words?
	How do you feel now after sharing your experiences?
	Before we finish, is there anything that you want to know about the project, this interview, or something else?

Table 2: Participant characteristics

CHARACTERISTICS, PARENTS	
Age	
Age range (years)	35–50
Age, mean (years)	43.1
Gender	
Male	3
Female	9
Education	
Primary and lower secondary education	4
Vocational education	3
Bachelor/professional bachelor	4
Master	1
Employment status	
Employed	11
Not currently employed	1
Living arrangement and family structure	
Living with partner, parent of the child	6
Living with new partner, not parent of child	3
Lone parent	3
Number in household, range	2–4
Number in household, median	4
Shared parenting arrangement	2
CHARACTERISTICS, ADOLESCENTS	
Age	
Age range (years)	11–17
Age, mean (years)	14.1
Gender	
Male	8
Female	4
School	
Primary and lower secondary education, first stage (5th–6th grade)	4
Primary and lower secondary education, second stage (7th–10th grade, including courses preparatory regarding exam or vocation)	8
Attending public school	6
Attending continuation school	6
Change of school	
Number of changes, range	0–4
Number of changes, median	1
CHARACTERISTICS, HOUSING	
Rental	5
Ownership	7