Language and creativity. Unaccompanied young refugees with experiences of war in institutional care in Sweden
During 2015, approximately 35,000 children and young people came to Sweden unaccompanied by a guardian.

Substantial challenge for the Swedish welfare system.

The social pedagogic perspective.
The purpose of the study is

1) to analyse the narratives of young people who have experienced a war, fled to Sweden and been taken care of and placed in institutions.

2) to analyse the narratives of institution personnel about the day-to-day work of taking care of young people who have experienced war.
Theories of relevance to social pedagogy

- The study’s general theoretical points are interactionist, influenced by an ethnometodological perspective of how people present their social reality.

- Identity, self-reference and role-playing.

- Limitation of social pedagogy.

- The empirical material – interview.
Method for gathering the empirical material of relevance for social pedagogy

Qualitatively orientated interviews with:

- six young people in care (from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria) who had experiences of war and who were later placed at HVB homes in Sweden,

- nine employees at HVB homes who work with this category of young people.
Interviews with young people

- war as a permanent social condition;
- school in the home country becomes demonstration, demonstration becomes school;
- learning war (war as pedagogical practice);
- normalising / neutralising the condition of war (“playing football”, “as normal”);
- flight from war is also war – or part of the war (deprivation of liberty/abduction, slave labour);
- the future in Sweden (struggle for social recognition/recognition of identity – for example as student, employee, person, breadwinner and homosexual).
Interviews with young people

- None of the adolescents who were interviewed expressed a need for treatment while staying at an HVB care home.

- Display of a humiliated and stigmatised self.

- Display of victim identity.

- Everyday interactions.

- Appreciation, criticism and expectations for the future.
previous chaos in reception centres in Sweden, now more orderly;
young people singled out and stigmatised by society;
importance of empathic attitudes and humanity;
no treatment is offered or given in the institution;
main task: to help young people to integrate in society;
there is collaboration with other professional categories, but it is limited (no more than what is essential);
young people’s age as a problem;
young people are described as greedy (reason for coming to Sweden);
maltreatment in institutions;
(in)competence of personnel.
Interviews with personnel at HVB homes

- Work at HVB homes is focussed on inclusion and integration of adolescents into the Swedish community.
- Adolescents - stigmatised and singled out in the Swedish community - hampers the inclusion and integration job assigned to personnel at HVB homes.
- Interviewees in the study portray themselves as competent actors.
Young people need professional help with integration and success in Sweden.

The lives of young people in Sweden are characterised by uncertainty.

Prelude to starting a new life is characterised by a continuing flight.
Interviews with personnel at HVB homes and young people in this study are sometimes extremely emotionally charged.

Personnel at HVB homes who are empathic, who understand and try to help young people, but also about others who belittle and abuse young people and even contribute to the risk of worse mental health in young people.
Thank you for your participation!