Unaccompanied young refugees with war experiences in institutional care in Sweden. A Weberian-inspired analysis of power relations in the narratives of young persons

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Background

War – Civilian

Unaccompanied refugee minors

Power (Max Weber - Randall Collins)
Since 2015, more than 35,000 children and young people have come to Sweden unaccompanied by a guardian.

HVB homes

Research project: Youth with war experiences in institutional care. A sociological study of young immigrants’ stigma and social comparisons
The aim of this study is to identify and analyze power relations that contribute to the shaping of young people’s identities and repertoires of action via stigmatizations and social comparisons with different reference groups.

The research questions addressed by the study are as follows: 1) How are power dynamics rendered in the young people’s war narratives? 2) How are power dynamics rendered in the young people’s escape narratives? 3) How are power dynamics rendered in the young people’s narratives concerning the post-war life?
Empirical material

Qualitatively oriented interviews with six young people from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria who have experienced war followed by a placement in institutional care in Sweden

Field notes taken in conjunction with fieldwork at HVB homes

Online media reporting on the category of young people who have experienced war, sought asylum in Sweden, and been placed in institutions
Narratives of young persons

War, violence, and the exercise of power

Emotionally charged

Painful memories

Professional actors in Sweden: empathetic people attempting to assist the youths, wielders of power who mistrust them and contribute to replicating negative emotions, degradation, stigmatization, and inequality.
Power relations and war

Postwar symbol production

Dramatize the significance of war interactions

Expressions of social identity - based on contrasting oneself from the Others.
Power relations and escape from war

Mortified and stigmatized self that limits and hinders any possibility of attaining their aspirational identities

The new situation as a refugee is marked by disruptive peaceful interactions (disruptive interactions not associated with the exercise of power)

Emerge and disappear on interactive islands of peaceful interactions in the youths’ narratives

Recounted moral code
Power relations and post war

Engaged staff

Stigmatizing social climate in Sweden

Exercise of power
Conclusion

Narratives combining wartime experiences and youth and institutional relationships

Creation and recreation of the young people’s identities

Alternative approaches to analyzing relatively expected traumatic perspectives

Social morals function in relation to the young people’s wartime experiences, their escape from war, and their peacetime existence.
Thank you for your attention and participation!