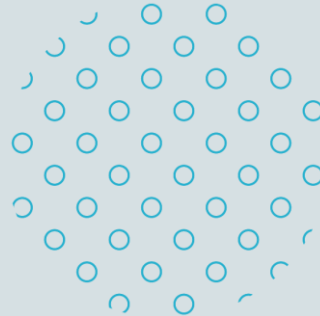


Trust and distrust among refugee youths

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Brief overview of the workshop

- Let's start with a question
- What is trust?
- Different forms of trust
- Examples from a study on unaccompanied refugee minors
- What can we do to become more trustworthy?

Let's start with a question...

- As a social worker, how do you gain the trust of the people you are supposed to help?
- First, give it a few minutes thought for yourself...

What is trust?

- A mechanism for reducing the complexities in the world – there is much we cannot do or control on our own
- There is always risk associated with trust. Others may choose to act in ways not in our best interests, but the benefits may be great if they do, e.g. social capital

Trust is a complex concept, not least because it consists of three intertwined dimensions:

- a cognitive base where reasons for trusting or distrusting can be given
 - an emotional base necessary for people to have faith in each other, and
 - a behavioural base where trust becomes manifest through acting as if the future was certain
- (Lewis and Weigert, 1985)

Trust in systems and institutions

- Personal trust (in people you know) and generalised trust (in strangers)
- Trust in institutions is based on distrust. Institutions have to be transparent and accountable (take responsibility)
- Documentation of practice is increasingly important, not least because of more emphasis on individual consumer and client rights
- Corruption is the number one killer of trust in institutions
- Refugees typically originate from societies where personal trust is (has to be) high, and generalised trust and trust in institutions is low

A study of unaccompanied refugee minors

- We interviewed nine male Afghan unaccompanied refugee youths 41 times in total over a two-year period, as part of the project “Care, Expectation and Effort. Resettlement of unaccompanied refugee minors in local communities” (NN4). The minors had stayed anywhere between a few months and almost two years in state operated centers, before being granted resettlement in Norwegian municipalities in 2011 and 2012. They were between 15 and 19 years old at the time of the first interviews, and lived in three different municipalities. They had different housing arrangements such as residential care, foster care, individual care, and supported or unsupported accommodation.

(Eide et.al. 2018: *Trajectories of ambivalence and trust: experiences of unaccompanied refugee minors resettling in Norway*. European Journal of Social Work, 04 August 2018, p.1-12)

Young refugees – double liminality (between «borders»)

- Theoretically, resettlement can be understood as a condition of liminality, meaning a 'transition during which the normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behaviour are relaxed, opening the way to novelty and imagination, construction and destruction' (Thomassen, 2014, p. 1)
- Liminality means living in uncertainty from being in-between what could be taken for granted in the past and an indeterminate future
- Liminality does not necessarily lead to desirable outcomes from either an individual, group or society-wide perspective. It can be experienced as meaningless just as well as meaningful and lead to segregation just as well as integration
- The youths are in a liminal phase between country of origin and host country, and a liminal phase between adolescence and adulthood. Vulnerability and resourcefulness!

Trust is important when reorienting oneself in life

- The worst is being lonely. No-one will stop you and no-one will help you (...) I test myself by talking to him (a friend). What I need, how I shall behave, when to get up (...) How much I need to save to go to the dentist, buy food, take the bus (...) I don't want to live with anyone. I can't take quarreling and fighting. If I shall live with someone and he shall have a party, don't go to school, not clean up, then it will be a problem. (...) What is good for me so I shall feel happy. (...) I only need one person of my best friends to help me and be with me. (...) I don't want to be with those who are free all the time. Those thinking about cigarettes or tobacco and such. They don't have money, they are at the shopping center and still on the street. But those who are sensible and think like me, they are busy all the time. (...) Who are there for me, and that I can trust?

Over time, they developed more nuanced relationships

- From blind loyalty towards transnational family to a more balanced view on their family
- From whole-hearted trust or distrust in social workers to pragmatic relationships
- From fear of being rejected by peers to choosing whom they would befriend

This lead us to suggest that:

1. We need better understanding of how and why young refugees choose to trust or distrust
2. More emphasis should be given to how young refugees assess trustworthiness
3. Trustworthiness is not only about personal trust in individual social workers, but also about trust in the institutions intended to facilitate young refugees' integration in the host country

Trustworthiness – personal and institutional

- Kohli (2007) sees personal trust as a prerequisite for assisting unaccompanied refugee youths in resettlement, and asserts that such trust develops when social workers demonstrate ‘reliability, regularity, consistency, affection and kindness, honesty, precision, clarity, praise for achievements, acting by permission, faith in the absence of certainty about the future’
- Demonstrating such qualities is probably not bad, but maybe not possible (for personal reasons, for not having necessary resources, or for not breaking the law) or even most important. Perhaps most important is how to become **trustworthy** to young refugees

Trustworthiness can be seen as a consequence of demonstrating

- competence (cognitive)
- honesty (emotion)
- reliability (practice)

Let's end with a question...

- As a social worker, how do you gain the trust of the people you are supposed to help?
- Both persons AND institutions can strive to become trustworthy, but
- A single social worker can hardly cater for all needs of a young refugee
- An institution can build on employees' different competencies, can be honest about the system of care, and can strive to be reliable
- Working with a constructive question: How can I/ we become more competent, honest and reliable, i.e. trustworthy?