“Professional feelings:”
Social workers’ reflections on the role of emotions in their work with unaccompanied refugee children.

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to get a better understanding how professionals working with unaccompanied refugee children perceive and reflect on their emotions evoked by their work and on their preparedness to handle them. Therefore, I chose to investigate how the sample of professional recognised, expressed and managed their emotions at work; what role did support and self-reflection play in exploring emotions; how the professionals saw the role of emotions in their work with unaccompanied refugee children; and how the participants described their preparedness to handle their emotions from the social work education. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine professionals working directly with unaccompanied refugee children. The findings indicated a lack of consistency in the views; where some said emotions could be utilised as a tool in social work, others viewed that expressing emotions might be seen unprofessional. Self-reflection and support of the colleagues and the counsellor in handling emotions were valued by the participants; it was seen to be helpful in working on emotions and becoming a better professional. Another emerging theme was the lack of discussion about emotions in social work education.

**Keywords:** Emotions, Social Work, Social Worker, Unaccompanied Refugee Children
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1. Introduction

The reason I wanted to become a social worker was to work with vulnerable children. As I read about this type of work, I realised how emotionally heavy and challenging it can be for a social worker to face the complex and sensitive cases. This raised questions within me about how I will be able to deal with my emotions in challenging situations, how I will react to the emotions expressed by my clients, how I will be able to understand these emotions; and how can I act professionally when the emotional load of the work seems overwhelming? During the past year, I have been reflecting on these questions a lot and tried to define my strengths and weaknesses. Through this, I have become curious to know what social workers working with unaccompanied refugee children think about the influence of emotions on their work.

Emotions are essential for humans; from alerting people of danger, to making social relationships (Grant et al., 2014). Parkinson et al. (in Walsh, 2008, p. 121) give this meaning to emotion; “Emotions can be understood as a feeling state characterized by our appraisal of a stimulus, by changes in bodily sensations, and by displays of expressive gestures.” Howe (2008) explained further how some of the strongest emotions occur when interacting with other people. Social work is about working with people; it is about building relationships between the service-users where the service-user can feel safe to share their story and express their feelings. Munro (2010) points out how social workers need to be able to read and comprehend their emotional responses, as self-awareness is the basis for being able to understand others. Social workers can pursue in building better relationships with service-users, by being aware of the unconscious aspect of emotions, and how they might be communicated non-verbally (Munro, 2010).

A professional social worker can recognise their emotions, but also the emotions the service-user is going through, and create an alliance where a helping relationship can be established together with the service-user. Howe (1998) discusses how relationship-based practice is essential for social work because relationships are the building blocks for human development. It is in relationships where we tend to experience the most intense feelings. As Howe (1998) argues children need healthy attachments from birth to develop to control their emotional impulses; and interruptions in the early stage of development have shown to affect relationship building skills later in life. Howe (2008) argued how good social skills are based on being able to manage own emotions and the emotions of others. Howe (2008, p.179)
continues how relationship-based interventions recognise that “… human well-being is founded on and maintained by good quality relationships.”

Social work today is under much pressure, due to the expectations from the service-users clashing with the budget cuts and neoliberal ideas of effectivity and cost-efficiency (Lawler, 2007). Managerialism and marketization are often referred as New Public Management (NPM) (Shanks et al., 2015), and this kind of social policies are claimed to lead to a more stressful working environment in social services where human needs are replaced with business-like service providing (Lawler, 2007). NPM is also seen to devaluate care work and prefer risk management instead of holistic service proving (Healy, 2009). Trevithick (2014) argued how in social work today managerialism is overpowering the emotional dimension of social work and can be seen as a hindrance in delivering quality and efficient services. Relationships are emotional experiences; and a skilled social worker recognises the impact emotions in the relationship building, whether the emotions are the social worker’s own or the service-users’. Managerialism, according to Trevithick (2014), demands focus on rational thinking and leaves less space for initiative thinking which is often based on feelings and emotions. For social work, this brings challenges for placing the emotional aspects of social work in practice; how emotions could be used as a tool in social work, rather than focusing on just coping with the emotions.

This study focuses on the emotional side of social work practice. Professionals working with unaccompanied refugee children were chosen as the target group in order to study a specific group of social workers. The interests were to find out how social workers perceive the impact that emotions can have in their work; interaction with the children, building a safe and meaningful relationship and creating a space where the child can feel heard and understood. How emotions might affect the decision-making processes, and how aware the social workers are of the role of emotions? Another reason I wanted to focus on people working with unaccompanied refugee children (under 18 years of age) was because I assumed their work to be emotionally demanding. As Leeson (2010) argued for looked-after children; a higher emotional engagement of the social workers is needed, as they are expected to give ‘parental’ support and care for children who cannot be looked after by their families. This could be argued to be relevant to the work done with unaccompanied refugee children; the challenges presented are often multiple due to the often traumatic backgrounds of the children. It was, therefore, an interesting focus group for this study.
1.1. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how some professionals working with unaccompanied refugee children perceive and reflect on emotions evoked in their work and on their preparedness to handle them.

1. How do the professionals working with unaccompanied refugee children describe their ability to recognise, express and manage their emotions?
2. How is the role of support from work and of self-reflecting described by the professionals in handling their emotions?
3. How do the professionals describe the role of emotions in their work with unaccompanied refugee children?
4. How do these social workers describe themselves to be prepared from their social work education to handle the emotions raised in their work?

1.2. Essay Disposition

The first chapter has the introduction, aim and research questions and explanations of the relevant concepts. The second chapter consists of previous research connected to the aim and research questions of this study. The third chapter has the theoretical framework for this study. The two theories of dramaturgy and emotional intelligence are presented and shortly connected to the aim of this study. The fourth chapter shows the methodology used in this study; the sampling process, semi-structured interview method, ethical considerations, credibility, analysing tool and the methodological advantages and disadvantages are described in detail to bring transparency to the research process. In the fifth chapter, the results and analysis of the results are presented. The sixth chapter presents the discussion on the findings and connects the findings to the aim and research questions. In this chapter, the connections between the findings and previous research also discussed and suggestions for future research are made.

1.3. Explanation of Concepts

1.3.1. Emotions

To give a holistic definition to emotions is a challenging task as it is a concept that has multiple definitions, depending on which scientific approach one takes. This is why it is hard
to define emotions only by a few sentences. Ingram (2015) argued how the concept of emotion might seem diffused if the multiple aspects of looking at emotions are not explained. Here is a working definition of emotions by Oarley and Jenkins;

1. *Emotions are triggered by situations where we find a specific goal in mind.* Negative emotions occur in relevance to a concern in the attempt to avoid or exclude the threat and strengthen our position. Positive emotions rise when there is no such threat but it takes the whole into consideration through inclusion, interaction or unity.

2. *At the base of any given emotions, we find the inclination to act and how to deal.* Giving priority with a sense of urgency, to one or a few specific kinds of actions. This can affect the relationship with those around us depending on how well-prepared one can be.

3. *Emotions are often experiences as a typical mental state, often followed by bodily changes, expressions and actions.* (adapted from Oarley and Jenkins, in Howe, 2008, p.38)

Emotions can be divided into two groups. The primary emotions which arouse reactions of survival value and focus our attention (Walsh, 2008). The secondary emotions are more liable to change, are socially acquired and evolved as humans learned to control and manage their emotions to bring cohesion to social groups (Walsh, 2008).

There are some other terms that need to be clarified to separate them from the concept of emotion; mood, feeling, attunement, and empathy. Mood is a more stable, long-lasting and less intense emotional state which is not tied to a specific situation (Walsh, 2008). Feeling is a concept many tend to use as a synonym for emotion. Damasio (Trevithick, 2014) simplifies this by stating that feeling is the conscious emotional experience. Trevithick (2014) continues to explain that when one is aware of their feelings, it is then the person can self-reflect and appraise the emotion, and then revise the action. Trevithick (2014, p. 294) takes up also the term attunement which describes the ability to ‘feel’ another person’s inner emotions; beyond what one can see from the person’s visible and external behaviour. This sounds similar than empathy; the ability to see the other person’s point of view. The difference being that attunement is more of an unconscious awareness, whether as empathy is a conscious awareness of the other person’s feelings (Trevithick, 2014). By understanding the meanings of these concepts, one can see how there are conscious and unconscious aspects in understanding emotions.
1.3.2. Unaccompanied Refugee Children

The term unaccompanied refugee children are chosen for this thesis as it the translation from “ensamkommande flyktingbarn” used in Sweden. There are other terms used for unaccompanied refugee children: unaccompanied refugee minors and unaccompanied refugee adolescent/youth. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles define an unaccompanied refugee child to mean a child who is seeking a refugee status and is considered as a refugee by applicable international or domestic law and procedures (ECRE, 1996). The child is also forced to flee across international borders, separated from their parents or another adult who is by law or custom responsible for their well-being (ECRE, 1996). The definition given by the United Nations includes the previously mentioned; but clarifies the last point to include minors who are without any adult care; meaning that minor siblings or informal foster families are not seen as lawful guardians (General Assembly, 1997).

2. Previous Research

Through searching internet databases I found research conducted on my topic. This was done to find preliminary answers that could direct my study and bring clarity. By connecting the previous research with the results of this study, I can gain deeper knowledge about my subject.

Many theoretical articles arguing in the place of emotions in social work practice was found; from building emotional resilience, emotional competencies, and explaining the role of emotional labour or the emotional intelligence within social work. Many articles argued how emotions should be “lifted back to the picture” in the social work profession (Ingram, 2013b; Morrison, 2007; Trevithick, 2014). It was interesting to see that not so many studies had been done about the emotional awareness of social workers; or how the social workers perceived that emotions might affect their work.

The following studies, journal articles, and a doctoral dissertation brought clarification to the research problem and helped to focus the study on a more workable area. By dividing the previous research into themes, their relevance to the study is clearer. The themes are emotions and social work practice, support arenas, and social work education.
2.1. Emotions and social work practice

Many articles brought up the place of emotions in social work practice today; from the importance of acknowledging the role of emotions within in the practice, to understanding how they might impact the practice. Some studies raised up how social work professionals are uncertain about the role of emotions in social work.

Ingram (2013a) presented the results of his Ph.D. how there was strong evidence of how emotions are a key element and a valuable tool in relationship-based aspects of social work. Ingram (2013a) describes the complexity of how emotions are used, expressed, shared and controlled by the interactions with the service users; for example how the feeling of empathy was found significant by the social workers, but sharing or revealing own emotions was met with uncertainties about its appropriateness.

Munro (2010) also argues, in the Review of Child Protection, how in child protection work, sensitive skills are needed in building a working relationship with the child, who might experience high levels of distress, distrust and fear. Munro (idib) connects this how social workers’ emotional reactions can also be a source of information.

Trevithick (2003) and Ingram (2013a) bring up how the emotions of social workers have also an impact on the relationship; as conscious and unconscious aspects of emotions can bring positive or negative effects to interactions. By this Trevithick (2003) means how being aware of those emotional cues, one can assess the situations effectively.

Leeson (2010) studied the emotional labour of caring for looked-after children. Emotional labour according to Hochschild (in Leeson, 2010, p. 484) “…is the amount of effort involved in work that entails face-to-face contact with the public and where the worker is required to produce an emotional state in another.” Leeson (ibid) adds that emotional labour means to be able to manage the feelings in accordance with the ‘feeling rules’ of the organisation where the person works; to suppress the emotions deemed undesirable or by including appropriate feelings. The results showed how practitioners tried to stay true to the social work values and effectively care for the children; at the same time, many of the interviewees said that they did not have the time or opportunity to reflect on their work (Leeson, 2010). The recognition of
emotional labour and the seeing the importance of emotional competencies was raised as something that could improve the working conditions and results.

Rajan-Rankin (2013) concludes that even if most of the students initially viewed that showing emotions might be considered ‘unprofessional,’ appreciation that emotions are part of their identity and essential in developing a professional persona. Rajan-Ranking (ibid) also argues how self-identity is a base for managing emotions and in building resilience. Keinemans (2015) bring up how the role of emotions in social work could be informative and give insight to the holistic situation of the service-user. The emotions can be a motivator for the social worker to help genuinely the service-user and seek to understand them comprehensively (ibid).

2.2. Support arenas

Another strong theme among the studies was the role of support in handling one’s emotions at social work. Both Ingram (2013b) and Rajan-Rankin (2013) mention the importance of support in helping social workers to explore and deal with their emotions at work. Ingram (2013b) came to a conclusion that informal support from colleagues was the most important way of expressing and exploring emotions as it was perceived safe and easily accessible. In a study about social work students’ perceptions of their experiences of managing emotions and developing resilience in their practice, conducted by Rajan-Rankin (2013) the informal support was seen helpful for reassurance and for coping with stress. Supervision in the practical placement was seen as space for reflection, where one could talk about one’s feelings and emotions (Rajan-Rankin, 2013).

Ingram (2013b) describes in his findings on the opportunities that social workers have in reflecting the emotional aspect of their practice the issues of safety in expressing emotions in the formal arenas. Ingram (2013b) continues how emotional aspects were often seen as something to cope with, rather than something to explore and learn from. The participants in the study expressed that in the informal arenas one could learn about their emotions, and get support in dealing with them. On the other hand in the more formal arenas, such as supervision, emotions were felt to be a robust stream of evidence and their place in the profession was unclear (Ingram, 2013b). The time available and skills of the supervisor were also brought up; if the supervisor was encouraging to talk about emotions.
Rajan-Rankin (2013) showed different views on emotions in social work in his results; and in many cases, the emotional side of ‘self’ was feared to be unprofessional. On the other hand also accepting one’s emotions as a part of the ‘self’ was seen pivotal in developing resilience and improving self as a professional.

2.3. Education

A few articles focused on the social work education, and how the education prepares social workers for the emotional side of the practice.

Grant et al. (2014) argue how the current general direction of social work education is focused on cognitive domain, rather than the emotional are of expertise. Urdang (2010) is along the same lines and argue how social work education in the UK has abandoned the building of professional self and focused instead on cognitive-behavioural theories and evaluation-based treatments.

Rajan-Rankin (2013) and Kinman and Grant (2012) bring up the importance of social work education in raising discussion on emotions and helping students to learn to explore and reflect on their emotions to help the student in their future profession. In a study by Grant et al. (2014), the importance of enhancing the emotional competencies of social work students, for the purpose of gaining emotional resilience and better tools to manage the emotionally demanding work. Rajan-Rankin (2013, p.2439) argue how social work educators should “…be in touch with their emotionality and comfortable in addressing the emotional needs of their students.” Rajan-Rankin (2013) continues arguing how emotional and social competencies should be a part of the social work education.

In the conclusion of the previous research chapter; the studies show how emotions seem to have an uncertain place in social work. In the other hand emotions appear to be recognised as an important aspect of social work, but at the same time, the place for emotions appears to be diffused within the social work practitioners. As Ingram (2013a) argues, emotions seem to be acknowledged as an important factor in social work, but at the same time, emotions are not seen as something to write on reports or sometimes even to talk with the supervisor.
Many studies mentioned how social work practitioners have mixed feelings when it comes to the role of emotions in their work, and emotions can be seen ‘unprofessional’ (Leeson, 2010; Rajan-Rankin, 2013; Ingram, 2013a, Ingram 2013b). This gave me an interesting starting point to see how in my study the social workers, first of all, are aware of their emotions, and how they see the emotions affect their work.

3. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I will present two theories I have chosen to use in my study. This study is of abductive nature, and before data-collection many possible theories were discussed, but after seeing the findings these two theories were seen to be of relevance. By connecting the study with these two theories, I can give the results explicit explanations and present the findings in a deeper/theoretical context. The connection between theories and the results of this study are presented at the end of each theme in the results and analysis chapter.

The first theory I am going to present is Erving Goffman’s theory of presentation of self; also referred as the dramaturgical approach. This theory is a classical sociological theory that uses the symbolism of a theatre to illustrate how individuals play different roles in their social interactions.

The second theory presented here is emotional intelligence. In broad terms, emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise one’s emotions, as well as others, and manage one’s emotions and help others in managing their emotions. The approaches of Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, Boyatzi and Goleman and Howe to emotional intelligence are discussed.

3.1. Dramaturgical Approach

Dramaturgy, in Goffman’s theory, refers to the theatrical representation of self. Charon (2001) explained how Goffman perceived the ‘self’ as socially situated, ever adjusting and controlling how one represents themselves to others. Goffman (1990) described the world being a stage, with front and back stage, where the individuals are actors who have different roles in different social situations. To understand this theory one needs to define the following concepts; interaction, gathering, performance, audience, and routine.
Interaction or encounters refer to a social situation where individuals are in contact with each other (Goffman, 1990). Turner and Stets (2005) explained how the encounter is constituted of components; (1) visual and cognitive focus of attention; (2) mutual willingness to verbal communication; (3) one-on-one gathering for greater mutual perception and observing; (4) a rising feeling of 'we' that contributes to solidarity and expression of emotions; (5) a ritual punctuation of openings and closings; and (6) ritualised courses of action for noticing deviance and how to adjust acts in order to outgrow deviance. According to Goffman (Turner & Stets, 2005), a fundamental unit of interaction is focused encounter; that are embedded in structural and cultural units.

Each encounter is abided in a gathering or a stage where the performance is conducted. Performance is the activities taken by the individual to play the chosen appropriate role in that interaction with a certain individual (Goffman, 1990). Gathering is embedded in the wider social and cultural mindsets of what is proper or improper behaviour, and also to the preformed courses of activities (Turner & Stets, 2005). In other words; every interaction is tied to the occasion which is a part of a larger context of cultural and social norms, values and beliefs that guide the individual to ‘play their role.’ The audience is the individuals present in the encounter, and who contribute to the performance of their behaviour and presentation of themselves (Goffman, 1990).

The routine is the pre-established pattern of action by the individual; if the same routine is played on different occasions with the same audience, a social relationship can be said to have formed (Goffman, 1990). These routines take place in different dimensions; verbal aspects of how example words and phrases are used; ritualised sets of behaviour and talk; frames of what is included or excluded from the interaction; use of props, like furniture or clothing; and the categorisation of the situation as work or social interactions. Routines also include role making “…the process of signalling the rights and obligations that persons can claim as well as the style of self-presentations that they can use in an encounter” (Turner & Stets, 2005, p. 28). Lastly, how the individual presents their emotions to others, the expressiveness.

As mentioned earlier Goffman separated the ‘stages’ to back stage and front stage. In the front stage the individual uses impression management as a tool to put the best sides of them out; to be more appealing to people (Goffman, 1990). In a way, individuals are strategists “…who manipulate the expression of gestures to present themselves in a certain way” (Turner & Stets,
Goffman believed that these different roles were rehearsed in the backstage; when the individual could be relaxed and drop the roles (Goffman, 1990). When being alone, without a social environment around the individual do not need to act or pretend, but to act in the manner, one feels the most comfortable (ibid). It is in this space where the individuals can reflect upon their previous personal experiences within different social environments.

When it comes to the role of emotions in interactions, Goffman’s focus was in the emotional dynamics. If individual feels like they have failed in their self-presentations negative emotions come to the surface for both self and the others; by expression of ritualised repairs the individual tries to mend the interaction and strategically motivate and manipulate the other person to see them in a favourable light (Turner & Stets, 2005). Here the cultural scripts are restored in order and also reinforced.

This theory was seen as an interesting way to explore the roles of social workers; if there are possible differences between the professional role and personal role when it comes to expressing and managing emotions at work.

### 3.2. Emotional Intelligence

Another theory I found relevant to my results was Emotional Intelligence (EI). This concept has been under much debate; due to the lack of one coherent and widely approved definition, models of EI, and EI measuring tool. Cherniss (2010) argued for the three common premises that the EI has, and where the four most common definitions lie on. These premises are; emotions have an important role in life; the abilities to perceive, understand, use and manage emotions vary from person to person; and these individual differences affect adaptation capabilities in multiple contexts (Cherniss, 2010).

Salovey and Mayer (1990) actualised the concept of EI after an extensive reviewing of literature on non-cognitive aspects if the classical intelligence. They define EI “…as the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). They identified four branches for EI; the ability to perceive emotions, the ability to use emotions to facilitate thought, the ability to understand emotions, and the ability to manage emotions.
The model of Boyatzi and Goleman is based on Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, but they have a focus on the social and emotional competencies that are connected with work performance. Goleman is one of the best-known writers of EI and is often referred as the one who “popularised” EI (Clarke, Lovelock, & McNay, 2015). The model of Boyatzi and Goleman has a framework of emotional competencies which are divided into personal competence; which consist of capabilities of self-awareness and self-management; and into social competence; which consist of capabilities of social awareness and relationship management (Hurley, 2012). The self-awareness and social awareness are about recognising the emotions; and the self-management and relationship management are about being able to regulate the constructs of EI (Hurley, 2012).

Howe (2008) argued about how emotional intelligence is a relevant and important for social work profession; Good social skills are based on being able to understand and manage one’s emotions and the emotions of others. Howe (2008, p.179) continues how relationship-based interventions recognise how “… human well-being is founded on and maintained by good quality relationships.”

Howe (2008, p. 14) gave a good overall view of the characteristics of an emotionally intelligent individual as; They “…are aware of and monitor their emotions; register and provide feedback on other people’s emotions; use emotion to improve their reasoning; understand and analyse their own and other people’s affective states; regulate and manage their own and other people’s emotions and arousal; and co-operate and collaborate with others in mutually rewarding relationships.” Howe (2008) claimed that if a social worker is not emotionally intelligent, the relationships between the service-user and social worker lack skill and compassion.

4. Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to give transparency to the process of the study. In this chapter, I will describe the design of the study, how the participants for this study were selected, how the material was collected and the analysis process. Creditability, ethical considerations, advantages and disadvantages of the methods chosen are discussed.
4.1. Research Design

For my study, a qualitative research design was essential for gaining in-depth knowledge about the multifaceted topic of emotions. As Sofaer (1999) states by using qualitative methods, one can describe complex phenomena and bring to light the experiences and interpretations of events of actors with different roles. As Coombes et al. (2009) argue semi-structured interviews to be a good method when investigating sensitive issues or complex behaviours.

This study has an explorative design, which according to Marlow and Boone (2005) differs from a descriptive design by the amount of available information. An exploratory design is exploring a field of knowledge which is not studied in high quantities (Grinnell et al., 2005). The suitable theories were discussed before the data collection, but through analysing the results, and finding connections with the previous research, two theories were decided to be relevant and to enhance the quality of the analysing. As this study combines inductive and deductive methods of utilising theories, it can be called abductive (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) state how by conducting abductive research one can explore the underlying patterns that help to explain the phenomena. The chosen theories of dramaturgy and emotional intelligence will be connected to the findings of this study in the results and analysis chapter.

4.2. Sampling and the sampling process

Quota sampling was chosen in order to gain a rich sample group. With availability sampling (Schutt, 2005), I might have risked only interviewing a very similar group of social workers. As Schutt (ibid) state that the advantage of quota sampling is to get a sample group that “…represent certain characteristics in proportion to their prevalence in the population from which it is to be drawn.” The chosen characteristics were; to find participants of different ages, and years of experience in this field of work. All the participants were to be currently working directly with unaccompanied refugee children. It was also made clear when contacting the possible interviewees, that they should feel comfortable in speaking English, and talking about their emotions in their work.

To find the sample group I emailed eight municipalities around Sweden and many other organisations dealing with unaccompanied refugee children in Sweden and Norway. In many
cases, I also called to the leaders of units (enhetschef) to get a quicker response. When contacting the organisations I made the chosen characteristics known.

Finding the participants for this study was challenging. From the contacts with the different organisations, it became clear that their workload is extensive; and many declined taking part in this study due to lack of time. In some cases, the language of the interview was also seen as a problem. The final number of participants was nine, which was a satisfactory sample group. There was sufficient amount of saturation in the collected data, to be able to answer to my research questions. The participants were between the ages of 24 to 34 and had work experience from four months to four years. These interviews were all conducted in Sweden.

4.3. Semi-Structured Interview

For my study, I chose to do a semi-structured interview, in order to give space for the interviewees to elaborate on the topic. The reason I chose semi-structured over structured was to gain a deeper understanding of what emotions mean for the interviewees and to be able to ask follow-up questions (Gochros, 2005). The language for the interviews was English because I felt that my Swedish skills are not sufficient enough to conduct an interview under this topic successfully.

A thematic interview guide was created to make the connection between research questions and interview questions clear (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). As Patton (2002) argues by creating an interview guide the researcher can have a structure in the interviews, but at the same time have freedom to explore the views of the interviewee in a more conversational way. The questions were organised under three themes; recognising emotions, expressing and managing emotions, and effects emotions might have in the practice (see Appendix 1). The interview questions arose from previous research, from discussions with friends that work with unaccompanied refugee children and by doing extensive mind mapping around the topic.

The interview questions were constructed in a way that they relate to the research questions and aim (Coombes et al., 2009). As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest I made the questions mainly open-ended to gain a better insight on how the social workers perceived their emotions the work with unaccompanied refugee children. If an open-ended question was not possible, I was prepared with follow-up questions like why and how in order to gain more
in-depth answers, and to ensure that we stay on the topic (Coombes et al., 2009). Input was also put to make the interview questions clear and understandable for the interviewees, who were not native English speakers (Franklin & Ballan, 2005). At the beginning of the interview, the participants were encouraged to express things they felt they could not find the words in English, to use Swedish instead; so that they could express their emotions and thoughts as they wanted, and not simplify the meanings behind. I also tried to avoid leading questions and to be aware of my role as an interviewer (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

To see if the questions were understandable and answerable, I tested them with some classmates, who worked with unaccompanied refugee children. Gochros (2005) highlight the importance of doing this to have a good set of questions before heading to the field. Robson (2007) adds that by testing out the questions one can fine-tune the different aspects. I noticed how some of my questions were difficult to answer, and I modified them in accord and took away repetitive questions. Robson (2007) also reminds that to conduct these kinds of interviews one needs to practice to gain the best results.

As Robson (2007) points out in a semi-structural interview, the questions do not need to be worded the same in every interview, and in the best cases, the interview situation would feel like just a conversation between two people. This was something I tried to pursue in my interviews; to have a flow in the interview and make it more of a conversation to create a comfortable space for the interviewee to express their views truthfully.

Due to the sensitive topic of this study and that the emotions might be challenging to talk about, I saw building trust between myself and the interviewee important. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) bring up the importance of briefing the interviewee before starting the interview; therefore, I began the interview by explaining the aim of the study and about why I chose this topic. After the briefing, I began the interview with easier questions about their background and what they think about their work. By doing so, I tried to break the ice, calm the possible nervous feelings of the interviewee, and to create a genuine connection with interviewee (Coombes et al., 2009).

The interviews lasted between 38 and 70 minutes. The interviewee could decide the location for the interviews; as I wanted to ensure that they felt comfortable in the interview situation and nothing would hinder them in sharing their feelings and thoughts. Eight out of the nine
interviewees were conducted at their workplace; a separate meeting room was available for us to use. One interview was conducted at the home of the interviewee. The interviews were recorded, notes were made during the interview, and directly after an interview, I wrote down my reflections of the interview.

4.4. Selection of literature

The peer-reviewed journal articles for this study were chosen via extensive searches in multiple online journal databases; Scopus, SocIndex, PsycInfo and Web of Science. The most common search terms used were social work (-ers, - practice) and emotion (-s, -al). Material that connected social work and emotions with working with refugees was also searched.

To find more studies and literature on the topic, I went through the reference lists of the journal articles that I conceived to be the most valuable and relevant for this study. Additional searches were done in the online database for the British Journal of Social Work. Through Scopus and Google Scholar I also looked for articles that had cited the chosen literature.

The chosen literature was found mostly from the reference lists of the chosen articles and LIBRIS, the Swedish national library catalogue.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were considered during the whole writing process. Already in the emails sent to the potential participants, I mentioned shortly that this study will follow the ethical standpoints of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of the interviewees (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and I invited them to ask questions. All the interviewees had informed consent and agreed voluntarily to take a part to this study. During the briefing before the actual interview started, I took up the same standpoints, to ensure that the participants would feel safe and confident that what they say will stay anonymous (see Appendix 2). The interviews were organised with the privacy of the interviewees in mind; their names, gender or age and other information that might make them recognisable were concealed.

The transcriptions, notes and recordings will be deleted after the thesis is complete. Citations from the participants were chosen so that they cannot be recognised by them, and that no sensitive information about the case examples was included. Other ethical standpoints that I tried my best to keep in mind were; that my study as research in social work should attempt to
do good, aim for creating something beneficiary for others and in its conduct try to ensure validity and trustworthiness (Boulton, 2009). Boulton (2009) argued that one should avoid doing harm by minimising the risks and by keeping the codes of practice in mind at every stage of the study.

4.6. Credibility

4.6.1. Validity

Validity in qualitative research is about studying what is aimed to be studied. Hammersley (in Franklin & Ballan, 2005, p.442) argues that validity in qualitative research can be referred as credibility, and the main idea is that the researcher can provide “…chains of evidence and sets of narrative accounts that are plausible and credible.” Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) give a definition for the word validity from the ordinary language which is of relevance to qualitative studies; validity as truth, correctness and strength of a statement.

To increase the validity of a study, the researcher needs to be aware of one’s standpoint and avoid letting own understanding influence the research process (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) remind to check continuously for possible threats to the credibility of the study; I did this by writing down questions along the thesis writing process. By questioning the content and purpose of the study during the processes of interviewing and interpreting the answers I could be more aware of the possible threats to the validity and creditability of my study.

By making sure that the interview questions were connected with the aim and research questions; I pursued towards collecting meaningful data for my study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To increase the validity of the study, the language of the interview questions was carefully thought through so that the participants could understand the questions. The interviewees were given the chance to say things in Swedish if they felt that they could not express their point adequately in English. By making it clear in the emails sent to the possible participants that the interview language was English and that the topic might be challenging to discuss; I tried to find participants that felt comfortable with this. This was also a disadvantage as I did not reach people, who did not feel comfortable with the language barrier, or to talk about their emotions. Coombes et al. (2009) also argue that by choosing semi-structured interviews, the interviewer can clarify and assistant the participants to
understand the questions the intended way; this increases the validity of the results. Even though measures were taken to minimise the language issues, there might be still negative influences of conducting the interviews in English, and it might affect the validity and reliability of the study.

Larsson et al. (2010) state that one aspect of validation is that the interpretation of the data needs to be comprehensive and grounded in the empirical evidence; and at the same time to be significant for the respondents and the wider audience (Larsson et al., 2010). While analysing the results, I pursued to interpret the meaning as it was meant by the interviewee. This reflects on the meaning of validity in qualitative research: In pointing out the importance of avoiding biases and seeking out the “truth” than could be generalised. Kvale et al. (ibid) continue in elaborating how validity is about making a sound, well-grounded and convincing arguments and back up the observations by using theories.

4.6.2. Reliability

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that reliability is about consistency and trustworthiness of the results. For increasing the reliability, it would have been good to have the transcriptions done by two persons and then to compare the different version to form a coherent final transcription (ibid). As I conducted this study alone, I decided to listen to the interviews twice: At first, I focused on writing the transcription as accurate as possible, and then I listened to the interview through again to see that the meanings were understood correctly.

Consistency, according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), can be increased by avoiding leading questions and by reassuring the consistency of the answers by asking follow-up questions. As one can see from the interview guide (Appendix 1), this was pursued to do, and some possible follow-up questions were already in the interview guide as a reminder for the interviewer. In the analysing process, different colours were used to highlight what was said under which theme; this helped me to find consistency in the answers.

4.6.3. Generalizability

Rubin and Babbie (2011) state one of the main purposes of scientific research is a generalisation. Generalisation of the results is possible to establish after reliability and validity are attained. My study cannot be generalised to the general population, due to the small
sample group. Anyhow, Franklin and Ballan (2005, p. 442) argue that for qualitative research an analytical generalisation is possible; “which focuses on the generalisability of findings from one case to next” instead of generalisation to the wider population.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) bring up ‘naturalistic generalisation’ which focuses on personal experience. By this Kvale and Brinkmann (ibid) mean that generalisation can be derived from unspoken knowledge by verbalising the experience, and, therefore, creating personal knowledge on the matter. Therefore, a naturalistic generalisation is more relevant to this study; as the focus of the study is on personal experiences.

4.7. Analysing tool

Patton (2002) brings up the challenge in the qualitative analysis which is the vast amount of data collected and how to bring sense into it. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that the transcripts, with the notes and recording, will form a good basis for the analyses. To make sure a proper quality recording was achieved I used two recording devices; recorder application on a mobile phone, and a professional digital voice recorder. The transcriptions were done with great care and interviews were listened through twice to assure that real meaning was captured and transcriptions were made correctly. By exploring the notes made during the interview and reflections written after the interview and the transcriptions, the analysis process started by recognising possible themes. The potential themes were; recognising, expressing, managing, self-reflection, role of support, education and training, and reflections on the role of emotions within the work with unaccompanied refugee children.

A method of using different colours in the transcriptions to highlight what the interviewees had said under each theme was an effective way for me to organise the findings. After the colour highlighting the material was gathered under each theme. By mind-mapping one can visualise the research material (Reason, 2010); and for me, it was helpful in going through all the material and organising them into an overview of the results. By doing mind-maps under each theme helped me to see what was said and if there was some conformity in the answers. As Reason (2010, p. 10) argue on possibilities for “… the user to follow their threads through a mind map are valuable qualities that we should utilise as we seek to enhance our ability to communicate complex real life research.”
Through this process I decided to organise the results into three themes as followed: (1) recognising emotions, expressing and managing emotions; (2) the role of support and self-reflection; and (3) reflections on emotions in social work education and in the work with unaccompanied refugee children.

4.8. Methodological advantages and disadvantages

By conducting semi-structured interviews and adopting the qualitative research design, I could gain an in-depth understanding of my topic and detailed contextual data, as argued by Coombes et al. (2009). Coombes et al. (2009) continue how through semi-structured interviews the priority is the perspectives of the participants; the interviewer can find views on the subject that one did not think about or consider important. For me, this method was fitting, as according to Coombes et al. (2009) semi-structured interviews are suitable for sensitive issues and complex behaviours. By this, I mean that in the interview situation I was able to reassure the interviewees when they doubted the quality of their answers, and at the same time clarify the questions if needed.

The flexibility of the semi-structured interview gave the opportunity to encourage and engage the interviewees in various ways (Coombes et al., 2009); For example, I could reassure confidentiality and anonymity. Another significant advantage of the chosen methods is the face-to-face interaction with the interviews which gave me the opportunity to read their body language and facial expressions; and by making notes during the interview I could during the transcription assure that I capture the right meaning of what was said, and gain better understanding of the phenomena (Robson, 2007). By using direct citations of what the interviewees said, in the results and analysis chapter, I can bring the findings alive, and also reinforce the validity of my analysis (Coombes et al., 2009).

When compared with quantitative research that can make statistical statements about larger populations (Rubin & Babbie, 2011); my study as a qualitative study cannot be generalised the same way. Even if this might true, my study can bring valuable insight to this topic. One of the main weaknesses of semi-structured interviews is that it is liable to be influenced by the researcher’s own biases; “Qualitative research measurements… are also often very personal” (Rubin & Babbie, 2011, p. 449). Coombes et al. (2009) argue on how the biases of the researcher impact the way the data is collected, analysed and interpreted. This is something I
have given much thought; how another researcher would interpret the material I have collected. To work on my biases, I had discussions with people who have an understanding of the topic; this gave me opportunities to criticise my interpretations and pursue in understanding the real meaning behind the material. The findings of this study are not meant to be positivists truths, rather give value for the view that the social workers have for the topic within their own and professional context.

Coombes et al. (2009) also question the quality of the results when the researcher is inexperienced and unskilled in interviewing, as there are many aspects to consider in the interview situation itself; leading questions, forgetting to ask relevant follow-up questions that would go more in depth and detail, talking over the interviewee, loose focus, or failures with the recording the interview. By acknowledging these issues and by conducting multiple test-interviews I tried to reduce these risks (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

By informing the participants about the subject and giving them a chance to ask questions about the topic before the interview could include a risk that the participants might assume what kind of answers I am looking for and adapt their responses in accord. This is why I chose not to give the exact questions to the participants beforehand, but only general information about the themes. While conducting the interviews, I noticed that some interviewees found some questions that required the interviewee to give an example of a situation challenging to answer. The language barrier was a challenge with few interviewees, but by giving them the possibility to express things in Swedish helped. As it was one of the characteristics I looked for in the potential interviews along with being comfortable talking about their emotions, it might have also been an excluding factor for interviewing persons who were not comfortable in English or talking about their emotions. By interviewing them, my results might have been different.

5. Results and Analysis

The interviews were conducted in Sweden in different communities and organisations. A requirement to take part in the interview for all the participants was to be currently working directly with unaccompanied refugee children. Nine interviews were conducted with eight women and one man. Six of the interviewees had social work education. From those six, two were child-welfare workers and four were housing support workers (boandestödjare), one
youth coach and two assistant therapists (behandlingsassistent) working in homes for unaccompanied refugee children. Three interviewees had different educational backgrounds; pedagogical, health care and social sciences. Two were working as assistant therapists and one as a housing support worker. The participants were between the ages of 24 to 34 and had been working for four months to four years with unaccompanied refugee children. The participants have been given code names by their work description; see the table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE NAME</th>
<th>WORK EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>WORK DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewees with social work education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker 1</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>A child-welfare worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker 2</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>A child-welfare worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSW1</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Housing support worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSW2</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>Housing support worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth coach</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Youth coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewees with other educational backgrounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSW3</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Housing support worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT1</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>Assistant therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT2</td>
<td>1.5 years as a substitute, 8 months full time</td>
<td>Assistant therapist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social worker refers to a child-welfare worker (in Swedish; socialsekretarare). They are both investigating the children’s cases and making assessments concerning their living arrangements.

The supervisor is a head of a home for unaccompanied refugee children (immediate superior).

The housing support worker (HSW), the youth coach and the assistant therapists (AT) are workers in a home for unaccompanied refugee children. Their main tasks are to help the children with everyday things and support them with adjusting to Swedish society.

The analysis was conducted by organising the results into three themes that relate to the aim and research questions of this study: (1) recognising, expressing and managing emotions; (2) the role of support at work and self-reflection; (3) and role of emotions in the social work education and the work with unaccompanied refugee children. At the same time, the findings are connected to the theoretical framework.

The first theme is divided into three topics; recognising, expressing, and managing emotions.
The recognising emotion focuses on how the interviewees perceive how they know what feelings they are experiencing in their work. The expressing emotion refers to expressing and talking about emotions at work. Managing expressions focus on how the interviewees describe they handle their emotional expressions and reactions. This first theme is connected with the first research question: How do the professionals working with unaccompanied refugee children describe their ability to recognise, express and manage their emotions.

The second theme focuses on how interviewees saw the role of support and self-reflection in working with their emotions. This theme is connected with the second research question: How is the role of support from work and self-reflecting described by the professionals as a factor in handling their emotions?

The third theme of reflections on emotions in social work education and the practice ties together the previous results with different topics. The first topic deals with how interviewees, with social work background, recall emotions discussed during their social work education. The second topic ties together how emotions are perceived within social work conducted with unaccompanied refugee children. This theme is connected with the last two research questions: How do the professionals describe the role of emotions in their work with unaccompanied refugee children? How prepared to handle the emotions raised in their work do these social workers describe themselves to be from their social work education?

Connections to the theoretical framework are made throughout the chapter.

5.1. Theme 1 – Recognising, expressing and managing emotions

Recognising emotions

The interviewees were asked if they think that is easy to recognise which emotions they are experiencing during a work day. Several of the interviewees responded that they found it easy or quite easy.

“I think it is easy, because in this job you work with the emotions. I think I know my feelings pretty well.” (AT1)

HSW3 and AT2 found it easy to recognise their feelings. However, HSW3 also mentioned that sometimes it is hard to separate her feelings from the feelings of others. Whereas AT2 felt that
sometimes it was challenging to understand the source of the emotion.

Among those who said it was easy to recognise their emotions, I found a few contradictions between their answers. Some said, under later questions, that they sometimes are confronted with challenges in knowing how they are feeling. For example, HSW 1 first said that she can recognise her emotions but later in the interview HSW 1 gave an example of a situation where she felt confused her feelings. The supervisor expressed that emotions come naturally, but also stated that sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is difficult to recognise them.

“"I want to recognise every feeling of course, but sometimes it is very difficult to recognise the feelings, because we are human beings, and we are all so different at the same time.” (Supervisor)

A few interviewees expressed that they do not think about their emotions when meeting with a child, but focus on work, leaving their emotions in the background. They said they tried to give space to their feelings after the meeting is over.

“"…I do not think about me or my emotions in the situation. I concentrate on the situation and try to manage that. Sometimes when I get out of the situation, it is like then all the emotions are coming and I realise how much it is affected me. During the situation, I do not realise it.” (Social worker 1)

The youth coach brought up how self-awareness is important in recognising one’s emotions. She found important to be able to separate her emotions and experiences from that of others. This aspect of being able to recognise emotions can be connected self-awareness and social awareness; which are the two competencies of Boyatzis and Goleman’s model of EI (Hurley, 2012).

“"If you choose to be aware... it is very important not to mix your emotions into something. Because sometimes I feel something that has nothing to do with this other person, but maybe it has to do with me, some problem I have or something that affects me personally and then I have to separate that... I think once you work a lot to recognise this, it can be easy.” (Youth coach)

Anyhow, a common expression among the interviewees was that in this field of work it is important to be able to recognise their emotions. Many agreed that one needs to learn about oneself to improve recognising emotions and reactions. The youth coach and HSW 1 said the following about learning to recognise their feelings;

“"I am moving forward with it. Because I am challenging myself every day. You need to
be critical of yourself and you need to analyse the situation you are in, to able to learn for the future…” (HSW1)

“I think it is something you need to practice a lot; you always need to learn more to recognise it… I am getting better and better at that (recognising own emotions)... and to think about it a lot afterwards and it helps to talk to colleagues about it... Because sometimes you cannot see it yourself and you need to have someone to talk about it (with).” (Youth coach)

**Expressing emotions at work**

The possibility to talk with colleagues or supervisors about emotions was seen as important by all the interviewees. However, some interviewees mentioned how some emotions were easier to talk about than others.

When asked which emotions are difficult to talk about, a few common areas sprung up. The most common example was when the experience of the emotion had a strong effect. Social worker 1 raised concern when talking about a strong emotional moment, that if she shared it with someone, the feeling would intensify causing said feelings to blow up. She was worried about how the person is listening would react as well.

“*When you hear hard stories that you feel affect you, but you also feel like it should not affect me this much... You feel a bit like you are not a good-enough social worker if you get affected by this small thing... You think that other people might think that you are weak... that I feel like they are going to judge me.*” (Social worker 1)

The youth coach also brought up how in her previous workplace (also a home for unaccompanied refugee children) she did not feel comfortable sharing her emotions;

“*I felt almost that they could see it as a weakness to talk about your emotions. They had a different attitude towards it...*” (Youth coach)

The second most common answer was when an emotion was considered too private to share. The youth coach said that she feels that she needs to work with those difficult emotions on her own more. Social worker 2 confined that she does not talk with her colleagues when felt hopelessness or thought she might be failing in her work.

“*... maybe those emotions that I would not share (with colleagues). However, that could be good to talk about, but I do not know if I would... It is more like the deeper, more intimate feelings could be hard (to share).*” (Social worker 2)
Goffman’s concept of emotional dynamics can explain how some interviewees felt uncomfortable to talk about certain emotions as they had had maybe bad experiences of failed self-presentation (Turner & Stets, 2005). In other words, how when talking about difficult emotions, one might have felt weak, or not understood; and this has led to strategically leave those emotions unspoken to motivate the other person to see them in a better light, maybe as a better professional.

On the other hand, HSW1 said that sometimes it might be good to share emotions that feel private, to create mutual understanding among colleagues. Another aspect was the challenge to talk with their friends or family about the emotions related to work. For example, HSW3 found it challenging that she could not go into detail about the cases and what had caused the emotional reactions.

When asked what emotions were easier to talk about, happiness, joy and successfulness were mentioned. HSW3, however, felt that it was easier to talk about sad feelings when something big has happened. AT1 said that it was easier to talk when someone asked about it after noticing a change in her behaviour. Some of the interviewees also said that it was easier to talk with colleagues who might have similar experiences.

“I would say feelings that I know that others like my colleagues also experience; there are more feelings that are like are more ok to feel like you are frustrated that it is stressful and you are upset with the "godman" (trustee) or a client. Moreover, these are ok to feel cause then you can ventilate with the colleague and that is ok. However, when it becomes deeper feelings in a way, I think it could be more difficult to share.” (Social worker 2)

The majority of the interviewees felt the safest talking to their colleagues about their emotions. Many brought up that it depends on the colleague, the quality of their relationship, and the situation itself. Some expressed that although they can talk to their colleagues or supervisors to a certain extent about their feelings, they feel hesitant.

An aspect of Goffman’s (1990) theory relevant here is the forming of social relation when the same pre-established patterns of actions are taken again and again with the same person, on a different occasion. A certain social relation can be formed between colleagues that can increase the comfortableness of talking about emotions. The routines in interaction are
confirmed by both of the parties, and therefore, a closer relationship is formed with openness and encouragement. Emotions were expressed and managed differently in the interaction in different situations and persons; the environment embeds a certain set of rules and norms that affect the professional’s role and strategies of interaction.

When asked if the interviewees feel safe in expressing emotions with children, there were mixed responses. Only a few answered without hesitation that they would feel safe in doing so around children. Two others said that to some extent, they could express the emotions depending on the type of relationship they have. The child welfare workers said that they can express verbally, to the children, if they feel sad or upset about something which concerns the situation, but would not feel comfortable to take it any further. Other interviewees mentioned here that “we are only human” and that expressing some emotions is important and it comes naturally. A few interviewees said that sometimes it is good to express emotions to show one is upset or disappointed to get a point across.

**Managing emotional expressions**

When it comes to managing emotions, a strong theme was the importance of remaining calm and talking to the children in a passive tone. By focusing on remaining calm in the situation, many interviewees could control their emotional expressions.

“*That I have to stay calm because I am the adult. I also think when the kids feel that I am safe and I am calm they can express these emotions. I think that is important. But I have to keep calm and I always think that when the situation is more relaxed, then you can talk about it...*” *(HSW2)*

“I was thinking that take it easy because it is coming now. I have to confront him in a calm way.” *(AT1)*

Some of the interviewees said that they try not to go too deep into the child’s emotions and maintain distance. Their way of managing emotions is to focus on the situation and/or the child. Others said not to take what the child says personally, but instead, try to understand the child’s emotions and behaviour from their context. To do this, they need to be able to control their emotions and not to have strong expressions of emotions in front of the children; to put the child in the centre of attention, rather than themselves.

“I usually try to keep a distance and control my emotions. I do not have to go into their
situations when they talk about horrible situations. I keep my distance and try to control my emotions.” (Social worker 2)

“We have children that have been through so much and they want stability and if I am confused and show emotions all the time; it is not professional if you ask me. You need to try to control your emotions in front of the children. Sometimes you get angry... get confused it is normal... However, I go to the office, talk to the other personnel and then come out again to the children.” (Supervisor)

“I mean if one kid does something and I get angry. I think it is good to express that, of course in a good way and not start yelling, but to say this not right... This made me feel angry and to be open about it. And like not to take over and suddenly it is about me... But to share emotions, I think it is good because it can also help them.” (Youth coach)

When asked about the times that it feels easier to manage one's emotions, many answered that happy emotions do not really need managing; they are just positive for the environment. Some of the interviewees said that it was easier to manage emotions in situations they have been before or were prepared for. Youth coach brought up how it is easier to manage emotions with colleagues or children with whom she feels a connection and a good relationship, and when she feels there is a mutual understanding.

Social worker 1 and the youth coach mentioned that surprising situations could bring emotions that are more challenging to handle. HSW1 said that it was easier to control her emotions with girls, because with boys there were often conflicts dealing with cultural differences;

“... They also come from cultures and religions where women are lower than them. So that is something I work with every day trying to show that I do not care if you are a man and I am a woman or the other way around. We are all the same. So that is challenging.” (HSW1)

Frustration was mentioned by few to be a difficult emotion to control sometimes.

“...As I mentioned for the frustration that you feel sometimes... And it is also often a situation that is repeating itself as well maybe. And you try to make it to work, but it does not and then you feel the frustration, but you know that that is just your feeling, because that person that you feel frustration about is not having frustrations at all...” (HSW3)
Some of the interviewees expressed how managing which emotions are suitable to express was sometimes difficult to know. The youth coach had thought extensively about a situation where she was confused if it would have been appropriate to show to the child that she is angry and upset about his behaviour. She decided to stay neutral and not to show these feelings. Later on, she thought back on the situation and believed it might have been good to show this child that she was angry and upset with him to create a mutual understanding of what kind of behaviour is considered proper. She emphasised that, of course, one cannot let their emotions take over the situation, and that the focus needs to stay on the child’s emotions.

“I think it is good in a way to show what you feel, as long as it is a good... that it is not about me, but it is about him and it is good for him to understand also what we feel.”

(Youth coach)

Other interviewees saw expressing emotions as a constructive way to help the children learn about how other people are affected by their actions, about right and wrong. This was connected to the ability to read situations, and to know what actions to take. Many said that one needs to learn from the previous situations to be able to know how to manage and use their emotions; but also get confidence in themselves and their actions.

“You have to make some mistakes, and you have to learn how does the staff or this child react in these situations. I think that is the whole meaning of this work. You need to be able to read people so then you can work out some kind of inner plan for how to control my emotions. Because sometimes you can feel that this child can take that I am speaking out louder to him... You make mistakes; you reflect and find your way.” (AT1)

By connecting the first theme to the theory of emotional intelligence, one can see that many of the participants in this study seem to recognise how being able to understand own emotions and to manage own emotions is connected to being a good professional; Howe (2008) argued how these skills are vital in social work for genuinely working with the service-users.

5.2. Theme 2 – Role of Support and Self-reflection

Support network at work

The role of support was connected to the possibilities that the interviewees had for sharing and exploring their emotions and their emotional reactions. Almost half of the interviewees said that it was important to have a chance to talk with colleagues about the day and emotions before going home so that one could leave work at work. An open and supportive working
environment to be able to talk about emotions was seen as important.

“I think it is good in my unit where I work; we are rather freely when we are upset or angry and we usually go to each other... So it is really easy to ventilate the feelings and I appreciate that... When you talk about it with someone it like calms down and you can leave it. For me, it is nice to have that little outburst.” (Social worker 2)

“... Relieving, like get it out and you can also get someone to tell you that your feeling is... They felt the same thing. You get someone to share it, with someone who understands.” (Social worker 1)

As mentioned before support from colleagues was perceived as the most valuable means to vent emotions by most of the interviewees. Reasons being that colleagues were easy to talk as they worked in the same space and one could assume they had similar experiences and emotions. Few interviewees mentioned how it was important to feel understood, comforted and encouraged, and get another point of view on things. Social worker 2 said that one needs to find their place within the work group, before feeling comfortable to talk about emotions.

More than half of the group also highlighted the counsellor as a platform for exploring emotions. An outside person to the work group, with therapist background, came from 1-2 times a month to hold a meeting with the working group.

“Every second week we have a mentor who comes in from outside and we sit and talk and that has more about our emotions. And I think that is an environment where you can talk about what you feel...” (Youth coach)

A few interviewees raised challenges in expressing their emotions with a counsellor; they felt that it was difficult to know what kind of issues one could talk about. HSW2 was questioning if the issue was “big enough” to bring up and worth the counsellor’s time. Also, if these sessions were only once a month, one felt that a lot could be forgotten within four weeks.

“It has to do though with luck like that the mentor has to be good. And you have to start feeling very comfortable with talking about these things.” (Youth coach)

Many of the other interviewees felt that they would not share too much of their emotions with the immediate superiors. One of the interviewees, however, expressed that she felt the most comfortable when talking with her immediate superior;

“The support we have from our supervisor. I think she gives us more than the 'handledning' (counsellor) does. Cause she can open up and make me reflect on things that I've never thought of myself.” (HSW1)
When asked if more support is needed, none of the interviewees expressed that this would be necessary. Few mentioned that one could always ask for more help, like a time for a psychologist, if needed. Talking about emotions was considered to be important because it helped to deal with difficult cases and it brought comfort and confidence. Especially in social work, it was seen necessary to the well-being of the working team.

**Self-reflection**

Self-reflection was seen by most of the interviewees as a good way to explore emotions; how one recognises, expresses and manages own emotions. Almost half of the group of interviewees valued doing self-reflection on their own. However, some of them also brought up the value of self-reflecting with the colleagues. The remaining interviewees said that self-reflecting with colleagues was preferable as this meant that one could get another perspective on one’s emotions and reactions. The youth coach said that by talking with colleagues, one can gain insight about things one cannot see. Two interviewees said that they do not intentionally or consciously self-reflect;

“... I mean I know what I feel, and when I get home from work I can reflect on the day and what happened, but maybe not my emotions like that.” (HSW2)

When asked what they could gain from self-reflection they could see the value in it. For example Social, worker 2 said that she could get a better understanding of herself and how she reacts to situations. The youth coach pointed out how by self-reflecting she can try to understand where her emotions come from, and by doing so, she can better understand if her emotions or own experiences influence how she is reacting to a situation at work. This was a view that few others also pointed out as being an important gain from self-reflection.

“I think you get a clearer understanding of where the feelings belong; if it has to do with me or if it has to do with something at work, something else... I do not think the right way is to shut out my emotions because they help me. I need to use the emotions, but just to use them in the right way. And I think that is what self-reflection can do, I can understand where they come from and I can use them as an advantage at work and use the emotions.” (Youth coach)

The main advance of self-reflecting that the interviewees brought up was the improvement of professional skills and learning to know oneself better. Two interviewees said that it was a good way to improve self-awareness. A few interviewees also brought up how through self-
reflecting one can increase self-confidence, and how self-critical thinking is essential to grow as a person and develop as a social worker.

“I think I gain self-confidence. Both in a way where I can find situations I did the right thing. It pushes me forward. But it also pushes me forward when I can accept that I did something wrong…” (HSW1)

Self-reflection was also seen by some to be a way to find a balance of emotions in their work and avoid burnout. Social worker 1 found it important to self-reflect so that she would not get too routinized at work; to be able to meet the children as individuals.

“... I want to feel. Because I think it is important in this work that you that you do not burn yourself out so much that you cannot feel. But you also have to take the responsibility for your life; You have to find your balance; make it work inside yourself. So reflecting about it, with yourself, or with others, but about yourself, I think it is really important too and not to stop doing that. I hope that I will keep Doing it in forty years too and avoid everything to become a routine.” (Social worker 1)

When connecting this theme to Goffman’s theory of presentation of self (1990); one can argue how the self-reflecting is in a way practising for the role at the ‘backstage.’ For social work the ‘backstage’ is the place to practice responses to difficult situations; to rehearse the ‘ideal’ reactions and ways to reach the best result. Here the social worker can also reflect on their emotions and their impact on the previous interactions. Many of the participants in this study felt that they have different roles home and at work; and how at home one can feel safe in reflecting on own emotional states and reactions. If then compared with what Goffman said about the backstage; at home social workers can relax and drop the role of social worker and give space to their experiences and emotions. In the front stage, the social workers use impression management to put the best sides of them out to be more appealing to the colleagues and show professionalism.

5.3. Theme 3 – Emotions in social work education and the practice

Education

Almost all the interviewees with social work education expressed that they did not have much education about emotions during their studies. Only HSW1 said that she had discussions about emotions in social work during their social work programme. Another interviewee who attended the same programme in the same university had a different response and said that
emotions were hardly mentioned. A few interviewees with social work education said that emotions popped up here and there, but that it was not practical. Some said that the focus was not on how they as social workers could work with their emotions, but more on the emotions of the service-users.

“The role of emotions... I mean I guess we talked about it during my studies. It is a completely different thing... I do not know how much we did that... Not so much, I think.” (HSW2)

“I remember in my education we talked about it a little bit but not too much. It is very different to try and talk about it and actually face it yourself... I would say; we have not talked about it practically.” (Youth coach)

Many of the social workers showed concern as into why emotions were not a part of the social work education. HSW1 said that more critical thinking should be evoked during social work education to open up one’s mind. HSW2 said that if training about emotions would be offered, one could learn to understand one's emotions better and be more professional when meeting the children. The youth coach connected being able to work with own feelings with fighting against burn-out in this demanding work; she found it is very strange that there was not much talk about emotions during social work education.

None of the interviewees said that they have had training from their workplace about the role of emotions in their work. Many showed interest and said it would be useful. Some of the interviewees mentioned that the meetings with the counsellor were a platform to discuss emotions. AT2 pointed out that staff working with unaccompanied refugee children is multi-professional and that for this specifically training about the role of emotions in social work would be good.

**The role of emotions in their work with unaccompanied refugee children**

The last topic focuses on how the participants to this study describe the role of emotions in their work with unaccompanied refugee children. Recognising, expressing and managing the emotions were seen essential by the interviewees and social work in general. Some interviewees mentioned that social workers themselves are the only tool in their field of work, and stated how social workers are working with emotions and, therefore, need to be aware of their own. A few interviewees expressed that one should have emotional stability and
knowledge of self to be able to help these children to understand their feelings.

“I think it is good to know what you are feeling when you are working with people. It is important. In this work you really work with emotions all the time, and you only have yourself, like you do not have any other tools to use.” (HSW2)

“It is important to control it (emotions) and... to let yourself have emotions also because we are not robots; we will have emotions. It will go up and down all the time. Try to have a balance. It is very important for social workers.” (Supervisor)

“I just think it is important to recognise your feelings to develop in your work; to make the next situation better and just to be more confident...” (AT2)

“Cause the work is mainly helping others control their emotions or deal with their own emotions. So if you cannot do it yourself, how can you help someone else do it? (Social worker 1)

Almost half of the interviewees brought up the fact that emotions are present in their interactions with children and the social worker is the one person showing them by example how to express and control their emotions.

“... Your mission is to help the children to reflect on their emotions and how they are feeling and you are supposed to be guiding them. “(AT1)

One of the interviewees mentioned the word ‘professional feelings’ that she has at work.

“At work, I do not think I let myself feel that much... It is my professional feelings at work.” (Social worker 1)

The word “professional” was connected by many of the interviewees to the importance of being able to work with one’s emotions to do good work. “Professional feelings” was an interesting expression as many of the interviewees used the word professionalism when they talked about the importance of controlling their emotional reactions to work. Almost all the interviewees made a clear separation how at home they could “be themselves” and express their emotions, but not so much at work.

Dramaturgical approach (Goffman, 1990; Turner & Stets, 2005) could explain how the professional role at work influences how the social workers express and manage their emotions in accord with the characteristics of a ‘good social worker’, whereas at home many of the interviewees expressed they can be themselves and express their emotions more freely.
Many of the interviewees mentioned how one needs to be professional, and in a way, this can be seen as putting on a role of a social work professional that has embedded characteristics. These characteristics are drawn from their social work education background, codes of conduct, organisational settings and their customs and regulations, and the national guidelines and rules for social work professionals. In other words, the professional tries to play the best possible role of a social worker they can be connected with the cultural and occupational context, and this is tied to emotions, and how the expression and controlling of them is perceived by the working environment or the profession.

Many the interviewees felt that emotions do affect their decision making and assessments, even though they should not. They expressed the needs to be aware of the emotions and seek help from colleagues if uncertain because otherwise one might have clouded judgements. A few interviewees said that it would be somewhat more dangerous if one denied that emotions affect their work, or pretended that the feelings are not there because then they might be unaware of their emotions. AT2 said that sometimes when she is feeling uncomfortable or afraid in a situation, she might avoid making the decision she thinks would be the right one. Youth coach said how recognising one’s emotions play a role in social work; if one cannot recognise and deal with our emotions, we might unknowingly treat the children unfairly.

“If you pretend that the feelings are not there, I think it can get a bit harder. If you pretend ‘no, my feelings do not affect my work at all, then I think they will affect you more.” (Youth coach)

Child-welfare workers took up the issue of feeling unsure about their capability to do their work. Social worker 2 said how sometimes it feels difficult to be the one asking the questions and stirring up the emotions and does not have a therapeutic relationship with the children. They felt powerless or hopeless in the face of the caseload, the means available to help the children, and the growing refugee crisis. They expressed that it is a very conflicting when personal emotions are put against the professional role.

“... you can see the things that they need, and you wished you could give that to them, but it is not possible. And I have to maintain my professionalism against those... A lot of times you have to stand for a decision that you do not really agree with actually... That is very co-conflicting.”(Social worker 1)

Many of the interviewees stated how it was difficult to leave work at work; to have a big caseload, and to be surrounded by the topic of refugee crisis also in their free time. Social
worker 2 felt that sometimes the two worlds, private and work are colliding; how after a difficult case one should just go home and continue with their stuff. The youth coach is on the same lines and said that one cannot shut one “world” from the other. She points out that if one is aware of the emotions, one is experiencing; it gets easier then to comprehend the reactions they bring on completely separate situations.

“…at the same time it is my job and I am of course allowed to do whatever I want to do on my free time, but it was the conflict in me ‘is this really what we are doing just rushing off from one client to the next...’ So afterwards, I felt really like *augh* (sound of being disgusted)...” (Social worker 2)

A few interviewees pointed out how the complex and often traumatic backgrounds of the children can make the work challenging. Social worker 1 mentioned how one needs to be even more capable of managing their emotions, and in putting their experiences on the side and focus on understanding the child’s background. HSW1 added how one needs to show the children emotions such as anger, but express it in a considerate manner. The youth coach said not to feel sorry for them or to go too deep into their feelings; to acknowledge their emotions, but not dive into them. HSW2 pointed out that one needs to be understanding that these children might have anxieties and feelings of uncertainty about the future.

“... because there’s a lot of like, anxiety and they are not feeling good at times and they have a lot of stress, because they are asylum seekers. So they do not know if they are going to stay in Sweden or not, cause there are many emotions... and then I think it is really important for us just to be stable and try to make it happy, like positive... cause they have so much stress and thoughts...”(HSW 2)

It was mentioned by many interviewees that building relationships are a big part of their work; it makes their work worthwhile when one sees the relationship develop and the children feel safer in sharing their experiences. Some interviewees also mentioned how it is natural to create deeper bonds with some children, but that one should try to be objective and thrive towards equal treatment of all. HSW3 said that if she feels a closer connection to a child, she might be more involved and share more of her feelings. The youth coach and the supervisor also said how sometimes if one is tired or affected by something that happened in their private life; it can be good to come to work and feel uplifted by the children and personnel. By having a positive attitude, one can see the influence and the effect it has in the work environment.

“I mean, I see myself as a positive person and I am happy most of the time. And I think that affects... Because I hear that all the time from the boys like 'you are so happy all
Howe (2008) argued how when building good relationships with service-users one needs to have emotional intelligence, as well as to be able to use on self in the profession. Many interviewees expressed, that they see self-awareness and self-management necessary for them to conduct their work properly, and also to work with their emotions. Many interviewees also could connect the intrapersonal aspect of emotional intelligence to the interpersonal aspects of awareness of others and relationship skills. Howe (2008) continued to argue how social workers with emotional intelligent competencies can create a safe environment for the service-user can explore and understand their emotions better.

6. Discussion

6.1. Discussion of the findings

The aim of this study was to investigate how the professionals working with unaccompanied refugee children perceive and reflect on their emotions evoked in their work and how they describe their preparedness to handle these emotions from their social work education? This type of social work was purposefully chosen as I assumed that emotions tend to be often on the surface, due to cultural differences and the often traumatic backgrounds of the children. Many did express how challenging it was to work with the children sometimes, but only a few interviewees brought up cultural differences and few others the aspects of how traumatic experiences of the children might have cause anxiety and distrust. The importance of open and encouraging working environment became apparent when the participants were describing how they felt about their work and the opportunities in reflecting on their emotions in their workplace. Positivity and expressing happy emotions was seen as a strengthening factor in the working environment; as it influenced the mood of colleagues and children.

One of the main findings was that there seemed to be confusion about the place of emotions in this type of social work. Some of the participants were quite straightforward in saying that one should conceal their emotions in front of children, where others said that it might be helpful in the bigger picture to express emotions in a constructive way. Many of the participants also brought up also how by expressing emotions and showing a good way to manage difficult emotions can help the children to understand and handle their emotions.
better. Some interviewees said that while remaining emotionally ‘neutral’ during a challenging interaction with a child.

Even though no definite conclusions can be made, the experiences of the two child-welfare social workers need to be mentioned. When compared to the interviewees working in the homes for unaccompanied refugee children, the child-welfare workers who only meet the children in meeting rooms had challenges in accepting the role they play in these children’s life. Both of them expressed how it felt emotionally challenging to be the one who is ‘only’ asking the questions, but cannot give another kind of support for the child. There was confusion when a decision had to be made that did not go together with their personal feelings about what is the best for the child. In other words, the professional role and procedures were put against the gut-feeling of the social worker. This combined with a demanding caseload and an insufficient number of times one has to meet with the child, made the child-welfare workers doubt their work.

The counselling sessions were raised as an important arena to discuss emotions, even if some had difficulties knowing what kind of things are ‘big enough’ to talk about. These counselling sessions, lead with a skilful professional, could encourage more discussion on emotions and highlight the importance of the emotional intelligence aspects. By learning to apply the intra- and interpersonal emotional intelligence skills, the well-being of the staff as well as their work effort might improve. Self-reflection about emotions should be encouraged by the workplace as it could lead to many positive outcomes.

Another interesting finding of this study was that almost all the participants with social work education expressed that they could not recall that emotion were brought up during their social work education, or at least not sufficiently or practically. Even though this sample is small and not possible to generalise from, this is a concerning find that raises questions about if social work students have enough possibilities to explore their emotions during the education? Mandell (2008) argued for the ‘use of self’ in social work, and how the ‘self’ is formed by personal history and psychological and emotional experiences. As social workers are themselves the primary tool in their work; the curriculum should have added focus on learning about self; and look into own personal history, emotions, experiences and culture that might have unconscious impacts their role as a social worker. For example in the Netherlands, this is a part of the social work education. Many interviewees expressed that exploring on
emotions and their effects would be useful already during university education, and also as training organised by the workplace. As the workforce in the homes for unaccompanied refugee children is multi-professional; the importance of being self-aware of emotions and being able to manage and express them in a constructive way becomes evident. Many saw the importance of knowing about self and one’s emotions, to genuinely help others to understand and handle their emotions.

International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2012) states how “social work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being.” This is connected to being aware of emotions and their impact on practice; as emotions are present in the interactions with the service-users. By being aware of own emotions and their impact on the situations, social workers can thrive towards meeting the service-users in a more holistic way and seek to understand and respect the choices made by the service-users. An interesting point brought up during the interviews was that it might be dangerous if the social worker claims that emotions do not affect their work and interactions because then one is not aware of them.

Many interviewees expressed how building meaningful relationships with the children was vital in helping them. It is these interactions with the children where the professionals experience emotions that might feel challenging to process, as well as the moments of success. The word professional was used by almost all the interviewees when expressing why it is important to be able to recognise and manage emotions expressions. Some connected its professionalism to self-awareness of emotions and the impacts it might have in the profession while some connected professionalism to concealing their emotions from the children to keep the focus on the child. This was an interesting contrast and it goes make these findings question even further on how emotions are perceived as a part of social work practice.

6.2. Discussion in relation to previous research

Many of the previous studies had similar findings are this study; one of the main on being how the place of emotions seem to have an unclear place within social work. Leeson (2010), Ingram (2013b) and Rajan-Rankin (2013) concluded in their findings how emotions in social work can be seen as being unprofessional. This kind of uncertainty about how emotions should be expressed and managed in the work done with unaccompanied refugee children was
visible in the findings of this study. Another aspect that was raised by Ingram (2013a) was the conscious and unconscious aspects of emotions and their impact on the interactions with the service-users. This was something that some interviewees also expressed; for example the challenge of not always knowing why one is feeling the way they are; and how sometimes the source of the emotions is difficult to pinpoint.

Leeson (2010) brought up how the ‘feeling rules’ of an organisation influence the way the workers deem some emotions as something to suppress, and others as fine to express. This was also a theme that came out strong in my findings; how some feelings were easier to express than others. The interviewees expressed how feelings that they could think others have experienced were easier to express than some of the more intimate feelings, and how this is connected to how open the atmosphere at work is for expressing emotions.

The helping role of informal support in handling one’s emotions was seen as important by both Ingram (2013b) and Rajan-Rankin (2013). Ingram (2013b) found how informal support from colleagues was felt safer and more accessible, than the formal support of supervisors or immediate superiors. Rajan-Rankin (2013) found how informal support was connected with getting reassurance and helping with stress. In my findings the informal support was seen as an important arena to discuss the emotions evoked by the work; in order to leave work at work, but also to get feedback and understanding. Many of the participants in this study expressed how they did not have a need to talk about emotions with their immediate superiors because they talked with the colleagues about them.

From the findings of Kinman and Grant (2012) and Rajan-Rankin (2013), the role of social work education in helping the future social workers to explore and reflect on their emotions was seen significant. The absence of discussion of the role of emotions in social work education was seen ‘strange’ by some of the participants in this study. As emotions are present in every interaction with the children, many participants felt that there is a need for more focus on learning about how own emotions might affect their behaviour and the interactions with people.

6.3. Suggestions for future research

One interesting topic for a future research could be to study how emotions are perceived in general in social work and among social work professionals in Sweden. How social workers
in different fields of work view the impact of their emotions in the work. This could be done in a similar manner as Ingram (2013a) did by sending a survey first and then conducting interviews afterwards. It would also be interesting to do a study on how the social work students perceive the effect of emotions could have in their future as social work professionals.

One of the findings of this study was the lack of discussion during the education about how the social workers’ own emotions might impact the practice. It would be therefore interesting to conduct a study investigating how emotions are taken up during social work education.
References


Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Background questions
1. Age
2. Work description?
3. How many years have you worked with unaccompanied refugee children?
4. How does your typical work day look like?
5. What do you like about your work?
6. How about what do you like the least at your work?
7. Have you had a chance to learn about the role of emotions in social work?
   o If yes, where? If no, do you think it is important?

Theme: recognising emotions
8. Can you describe a situation(s) that you felt that you handled well? (look for an example)
   a. Can you describe what emotions did you have before, during and after the situation?
9. Can you describe a situation or situations that have felt particularly challenging?
   b. How did you managed (or didn’t managed) to deal with the situation?
   c. Can you describe what emotions did you have before, during and after the situation?
10. Do you think it is easy or difficult to recognise which emotions you are experiencing?
11. What is the role of being able to know how one is feeling for a social worker? Does it play a role in practice? If yes, why? If not, why
12. Have there been situations where you might have felt confused about your feelings and how to react in that situation? If yes, can you clarify?
13. Do you self-reflect on the emotions you experience at your work?
   d. How do you this? What do you think you gain from this?
14. Have there been situations where you have avoided talking about your emotions? Can you give an example?

Theme 2. Expressing and Managing Emotions
15. How do feel about talking about the emotions that arise during your work?
   a. What kinds of emotions are easier to talk about?
16. What do you think about being able to express emotions at workplace? Is this something you find important? Why/why not?
17. Do you feel safe in expressing emotions
   b. With the children? With your colleagues? With your supervisor?
18. What do you think; is it important to be able control emotional reactions at work?
   c. Why? How do you do this?
19. What do you think “managing ones emotions” means for social work in general?
   d. What about when working with unaccompanied refugee children?
20. In which situations do you feel it is easy to manage emotions? (examples?)
21. In which situations do you feel it is difficult to manage emotions? (examples?)
22. Have you witnessed some emotional reactions that you thought were...
   a. …particularly well-handled? Can you give some examples?
      i. In your opinion, what made the emotional reactions well-handled?
   b. …not handled that well? Can you give some examples?
      i. Why do you think these emotional reactions were not that well-handled?
23. At your work place, do you have the possibility to talk about different kinds of emotions that have arisen during the interaction with the children?
   c. Can you tell more about the formal meetings (with supervisor or someone similar)?
   d. What about informal arenas (like during coffee breaks, with colleagues)?
24. Which kind of support in handling emotions do you think is the most valuable for you, and why?
25. Have you had a situation where you felt like you would have needed more support or help in handling your emotional reactions? Please give an example.
26. How would you describe the role of your working environment in handling emotions?
27. Do you think that some further education/training about emotions in social work would be necessary?
   e. How would you see this being beneficial?
28. Can you separate emotional experiences that you have at work from your personal life?
29. Do you sometimes feel over-powered with some emotional states? Can you give some examples?

**Theme 3. The effect emotions might have for the practice**

30. Do you think that some emotional states can affect your work?
31. Can you describe situations that gave rise to emotions and how this might impact your actions?
32. Do you think emotions impact your assessments?
   a. If yes, how? If no, how do you shut your emotions away from the process?
33. Can some strong emotional reactions (positive and/or negative) have effects on the working environment? Can you give some examples from you experience?
Appendix 2 – Consent

- **Introduction** - BA thesis University of Gävle - **International Social Work**

- **Explaining the purpose of the study**

- **Recording** – With your permission, I will record and take notes during the interview.
  - To accurately record the information you provide
  - Transcription purposes only – deleted afterwards
  - Do I have your consent for recording this interview?

- **Ethical considerations**
  - Voluntary **participation**, and **consent** of participants
  - **Anonymity** and **privacy** (no names, nor details that could lead the person to be recognised)
  - **Confidentiality**
    - The data collected from this interview will be handled as confidentially.
    - If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used

- **Contact information**

- **Possibility** that I contact you further information or clarification

- Also, if you’d like to see the **transcriptions** afterwards, or to see the **thesis** before I submit it to the examination board