Migrant men – an untapped resource in care professions

palle.storm@socarb.su.se
Gender and ethnicity among the staff

- 69 percent are Swedish-born women
- 7 percent are Swedish-born men
- 20 percent are women born outside Sweden
- 4 percent are men born outside Sweden/Europe
In Stockholm:

- 50 percent of the staff are born outside Sweden.

- Two of three men care workers in Stockholm are born outside Europe, most of them from countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin-America.

- A care work in transition (challenges norms about the ”real” care worker as a white, middle aged women).
Some trends:

- An aging and greying population
- Hard(er) to attract staff
- Colorization and Masculinization among frontline care workers.
- Care work as an ethnic niche.
- As Bourgeault et al (2010) writes ”The knowledge-gap about migrant workers situations is alarming.”
The aim of the study was

- to investigate experiences of being a man, born outside Europe, working in nursing homes in the area of Stockholm. What does it mean to have a body which deviates from the normative picture of a care worker? And how does this ”otherness” affect interactions with co-workers, and residents?
Participants in the study

- 12 men born in ten different countries outside European/Anglo-Saxon contexts.

- Worked between 2-11 years in nursing homes

- No experiences of paid care work before the migration to Sweden.
The way into care work

- Attracted into care work
- Guided into care work
- Care work as an coincident
Tension related to masculinity

- I work most with a guy from Africa, we have been working together for almost ten years. We are not just friends, he's like a brother now. I told him, “We are being like girls”, he looked at me laughing. “We have become strange guys, I used to a macho-latino before”. (Victor, born in Chile).
Defending career choice

Afghan men do not want to work in a nursing home. They say, "Are you going to handle a poo?" Is that wrong? Should I work with something else, like driving taxi? No I do not want it. (Rahel, born in Afghanistan)

No, they will not stay. There are many (Swedish male students) in the summer going in high school or some other education. Some also stay after the summer and come and work extra to make money. They do not think it's a fun job, even if they trying (Haile, born in Ethiopia)
Not too many men:

I do not think it’s fun to have two men standing at an older women’s bed helping her. You do not know what she might think, even if she suffers from dementia. Personally, I do not want to work with a man in the same unit. You can get help, but I do not think it’s fun to always call a women co-worker at another unit “come here and help us, we are two men here.” If the residents do not want help, why should we not avoid it? (Sharif, born in Iraq)
Interactions with women residents

I think I respect her much, especially when I help her to shower. I try to do it fast, without making it sloppy, shower her in a good way. I understand her body language, if she uncomfortable... or something else. If so, I usually ask her "should I ask my co-worker if they can help you?" (Kade, born in Indonesia)
Experiences of racism

I fed him, but suddenly he became aggressive and started to scream, he called me the N-word. I said "no, you are not allowed to use that word." But he continued, so I left the dining room and went to my manager to tell about the situation, what he said, and that I needed a break and someone else must help him. He is sick, so maybe he does not know exactly what he is saying, so I cannot take it personally, but I must protect my integrity (Kevin, born in Ghana)
Migrant men in care work:

- Migrant men in care work are a resource in care professions, but we need to be aware of/recognize the double dilemma to be both a **man** and a **non-white** care worker.

- SFI- educations (Swedish for immigrants) is crucial to highlight care works for migrant men. But the education and trainees must be based on both caring skills and language- and writing skills.
Migrant men can be considered as wanted care workers but:

- we must recognize that different categories of care workers may need different amounts of time in order to be considered as wanted care givers and wanted colleagues.

- time and flexibility are not only crucial for the quality of care, it is also crucial to maintain and increase diversity among the staff.