

**‘Becoming Adult in Another Man’s Land’:
The Contested Life Projects of Unaccompanied Young
Migrant and Refugee Men Negotiating Pathways through
Welfare, Asylum and Immigration Regimes in Europe**

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Abstract

This thesis draws attention to a range of factors that influence why, how and when young migrant and refugee men engage with statutory and non-statutory sources of welfare and methods of immigration control as they ‘become adult’ in Europe. It does so through mixed methods qualitative research which took place over a period of 18 months in two cities in England and Italy. The four papers that constitute the body of the thesis draw on: critical policy-analysis; participatory research based in three support institutions; arts-based research conducted in collaboration with museums; and semi-structured interviews with unaccompanied young men, policy makers and practitioners. Read together, the papers raise fundamental questions pertaining to the ‘best interests’ of children and youth, and about how young migrant and refugee men engage with and understand welfare and the state as they pursue evolving plans and dreams in a context of increasing surveillance and immigration control. The thesis argues that unaccompanied young migrant men usually have clear – albeit malleable – ideas about the objective(s) of their migration. The European policy literature refers to such objectives as ‘life projects’. It is argued here that the life projects of young migrant and refugee men are poorly understood and this leads to a disconnect between the intentions and desires of the young people on the one hand and those of the various policy actors who seek to assist and/or govern them on the other. Several dimensions of the life projects of young migrant and refugee men are elucidated in this thesis. Among other findings, it suggests that they are inherently relational, shaped by the ideas of the young people in question and by those of their family members and social networks. They are also shown to be gendered and re-negotiated upon contact with a range of facilitating or hindering factors encountered upon arrival in Europe. Moreover, these life projects are rearticulated, renegotiated and reformed through the development and sharing of personal and collective narratives or stories.

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Prologue: All My Sons

They go,
Even before they arrive.

When they get to Libya it becomes an ocean to them,
The wages of the desert.

Sometimes they close the border.
Sometimes not.

Speed!
The borders can be closed at any time.

We are not afraid.
We have passed the Sahara,
We have passed the Mediterranean Sea.

Five children stand giggling in the shopping trolley, squealing with delight as a volunteer blows bubbles on them and someone unpacks the sanitary towels, the razors, the paper cups.

He was really happy to speak,
and so we sat outside the main door under a tree in the shade on plastic chairs and he said he would tell me about his life and the situation of the young people.

Anyone in Eritrea is property of the regime.

Some will go the first day, some after four days. Some will stay for months.
It depends on luck.

Yes, some will make it.

They went,
Even before they arrived.

Poem constructed by the author from interviews and ethnographic field notes. Method adapted from Furman et al. (2007).

Introduction

In 2014, some 23,000 unaccompanied children (minors legally under the age of 18) applied for asylum in one of the 28 European Union (EU) member states. This marked a significant increase in numbers relative to the past few years, which had averaged between 11,000 to 12,000 applications annually between 2008 and 2012 (Eurostat 2013; Chase and Allsopp 2014). In 2016, however, the number rose to 90,000 (Eurostat 2017). This precipitous increase was a response to ongoing political and economic insecurity in migrant sending countries including Egypt and Albania, coupled with multiple new and protracted refugee crises in other countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea and Syria. The age and gender composition of this group have remained relatively constant during this period – primarily young males between 15 and 17 years of age. The countries of origin of those arriving however have varied over place and time.

Thousands of other children of similar ages have been hosted in EU countries as (non-asylum seeking) unaccompanied minors. This is particularly the case in the EU's Southern Mediterranean states, such as Italy which at the time of research operated dual asylum and non-asylum pathways to integration for unaccompanied minors (European Migration Network 2010; European Commission 2012). In the EU, an unaccompanied minor is defined by Directive 2011/95/EU as a child (under the age of 18) who arrives on the territory of an EU member state unaccompanied by a responsible adult or who is left unaccompanied after he or she has entered the territory of the member state.

An unknown number of other unaccompanied children also arrive in Europe undetected, coming to live in private fostering arrangements or to work in the irregular economy (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights 2009, 2011). These children – who may be survivors of

human trafficking (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights 2009; Anderson 2012) – commonly originate from economically under-developed or war-affected countries. Among these are Bangladesh, Albania, Egypt and Vietnam.

Previous research has shown that across these sub-groups (asylum seeking minors, non-asylum seeking minors known to the authorities and undetected minors), children come to Europe unaccompanied in search of safety (Kanics et al. 2010; Hopkins and Hill 2008); education (Refugee Support Network 2010; Gladwell and Elwyn 2012); to support their families financially (Nicolini 2010); and in the hope that there they will be able to build a better future (Brighter Futures 2014; Allsopp et al. 2015). There are of course other reasons for migrating. Most commonly young people's motivations are a mix of push and pull factors.

In their sudden transition from privileged rights holders as 'children' – who are afforded the same rights as citizen children by law in (most) EU member states (Chase and Allsopp 2014) – to 'adults', unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men occupy a unique position in relation to the welfare state, the immigration regime and to what Sainsbury (2012) has referred to as the associated political dynamics of 'inclusion and exclusion'. As children, for example, they may receive free education, shelter and health care whereas once they 'become adult', this may cease to be the case (Wade 2011).

This thesis explores how a group of young people managed this transition in two cities in England and Italy. We will see that 'becoming adult' in policy and legal terms is defined differently both across these two sites and across a range of different services and immigration control apparatuses within them. As past research has documented, age related thresholds that govern access (or cessation of access) to certain social services and legal

rights for unaccompanied young minors range from 16 to 25 years of age (Wade 2011; Allsopp et al. 2015).

The research gap

This thesis is important because it is among the first studies to explore the post-18 experiences of the unaccompanied young male migrants who continue to form an important population of irregular arrivals to Europe. These irregular movements are characterized as at once hard to anticipate, and by the fact that the young people are often positioned as ‘illegal’ in the European societies in which they arrive. This is because of their means of arrival (e.g. via smuggling or overstaying visas) and, as we will see, because of livelihoods or means of survival which may put them in opposition to the rule of law.

I employ the terminology ‘irregular’ with this context in mind throughout this thesis and seek to avoid using terms such as ‘illegal’ and ‘legal’. In so doing I seek to avoid reifying categories and practices of ‘illegalisation’ that have been shown to be deeply harmful both symbolically and materially (Schuster 2005; De Genova et Peutz 2015), especially for undocumented young people (Gonzales 2011; Bloch et al. 2014).

This thesis speaks to a range of other underexplored pressing contemporary policy concerns, including the very current debate on ‘missing children’. The issue of unaccompanied youth ‘disappearing’ from statutory support structures has become an important international concern in recent years in EU countries. Ten thousand unaccompanied children were registered as ‘missing’ from institutional support in 2015 alone, 5,000 of these in Italy

(Eurostat 2016).¹ Many more young people disappear as they turn 18 and lose access to the formal rights previously accorded to them as children (Chase and Allsopp 2014; Kohli 2012).

Past research tells us that some of these young people ‘disappear’ consciously. They may go on to work in precarious micro economies (Bloch et al. 2012, 2014) or transit to other places (Gladwell and Elwyn 2012). Others may have been trafficked (EU Fundamental Rights Agency 2011).

Advocates have begun to pay attention to the related phenomenon of the gendered nature of the pre-and post-flight experiences of this group of welfare beneficiaries and migrants however again, this research is limited. The NGO Médecins Sans Frontières, for example, refers to unaccompanied young male migrants and refugees informally as ‘Europe’s new vulnerable’ (private correspondence 2017).

This thesis focuses specifically on the experiences of young refugee and migrant men who make up the majority of the population of unaccompanied minors coming to Europe. The predominance of males in this population (which exists in comparison to the global population of displaced individuals in which more than half are female), is determined by a range of factors. These include their roles as heads of households; possible gendered experiences of persecution; and also the role of migration for them as part of a transition to adulthood and manhood (Monsutti 2007; Crivello 2011).

¹ As will be discussed later in this thesis (papers one and two), the reliability of this quantitative data has nevertheless been rightly questioned (see Sigona and Allsopp 2016).

To date, the post-18 experiences of unaccompanied male youth migrants are scantily researched and poorly understood. We know little about how and why young migrant and refugee men understand and engage with the state (or do not do so) as they come of age; specifically, their experiences and how they make decisions over time and place and assess risk when faced with shifting rights in relation to welfare, labour market and immigration control and asylum regimes. This thesis seeks to fill this knowledge gap.

The data gap in relation to the experiences of this group has in part been explained by the fetishization of the experiences of ‘deserving’ children (and Convention refugees) by European policy makers and advocates (Starfield 2018). This concentration of resources on helping child refugees who conform to hegemonic ideals of deservingness has come to some degree at the expense of assisting the ‘undeserving’ migrant adults who are also the subject of this thesis (Starfield 2018). Participants in this research were motivated by seeking sanctuary in addition to responding to a range of economic, educational or family pressures. The research challenges traditional binaries of deserving and deservingness and explicitly engages with the question of mixed migration.

Academic analysis often divides migrant groups and groups at different stages of the life course according to pre-existing policy categories. These are shaped in turn by bureaucratic labelling practices and legalistic stratification of social rights (Morris 2002; Soysal 2012). Such studies risk perpetuating assumptions rather than testing them.

The binaries that are shown in this thesis to govern the experiences of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men (and which often bleed into the academic literature without being interrogated) include child/adult and labour migrant/refugee. These exist alongside other

gendered classifications of deservingness through which migration, asylum, welfare and other social policies function. This thesis walks a line whereby it seeks to maintain policy relevance and speak to practice whilst also demonstrating the limitations and harms of certain bureaucratic labelling processes (Zetter 1991, 2007).

The discipline of narrative and storytelling shaped how I collected and treated the data presented in this thesis as well as the ways in which I have approached the question of evidence. This original approach is discussed further in the methodology and ethics sections that follow and in the thesis Conclusion.

Read together, the four papers raise fundamental new questions pertaining to the ‘best interests’ of children and how young migrant and refugee boys and men understand and engage with welfare and the state as they pursue their evolving plans and dreams in a context of increasing surveillance and immigration control in Europe.

The policy context: ‘becoming adult’ in the EU as an unaccompanied minor

According to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol (UN Refugee Convention), a refugee is someone who has a ‘well-founded fear of persecution’ for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group who is unable or unwilling to return home. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are among the main reasons that refugees flee their countries.

The narrowness of the refugee definition excludes many individuals fleeing economic instability, war or generalised violence (Schuster 2011; Betts and Collier 2018). These

individuals may be eligible for one of a number of alternative types of protection, such as humanitarian protection, subsidiary protection² or protection as a stateless person, in keeping with EU and international law. As discussed in paper two of this thesis, the type of protection, legal status and rights and welfare entitlements available depends on the country in which sanctuary is sought or in which the individual becomes known to the authorities (Chase and Allsopp 2014).

In most EU states, unaccompanied young migrants are entitled to protection as children under international law (see in particular the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). As they reach a certain age, unless they are recognized as refugees or as in need of humanitarian protection (which the majority are not), the legal right to remain and to access certain welfare provisions are exhausted (Wade 2011; Chase 2013a). This phenomenon is known informally among support workers and young people as ‘ageing out’ (Allsopp et al. 2015). It may coincide with transitions at the biologically assigned ages of 16, 18, 19, 21 or 25, depending on the country (Crawley and Rolands 2007; Wade 2011).

Statutory and non-statutory welfare structures impose their own ideas about what should be the life projects of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees; moreover, state bureaucracies attach norms of credibility to the narratives articulated by these young people as they relate to the past, present and future (Souter 2011). These norms serve to channel the young people into certain pathways, assign them labels and grant them access to different constellations of rights. They may be perceived by the recipients to help or hinder the life

² This is a ‘lesser’ form of humanitarian protection granted in some EU Member States to individuals who cannot be returned to their countries for a broader range of dangers than those included within the Refugee Convention. These include, for example, generalised violence, as codified in the EU Qualification Directive which is part of the EU’s so-called Common European Asylum System (CEAS) (see e.g. McAdam 2005).

projects of their own making. The tension between these structural and subjective constructions of life projects is the thread that runs throughout this thesis.

Turning 18

Existing evidence tells us that as they ‘become adult’ in Europe, young migrant and refugee men may face poverty (Allsopp et al. 2014; Pinter 2012), social exclusion (Bloch et al. 2014), and/or labour market and other forms of exploitation (Anzaldi and Guarnier 2014). All unaccompanied minors are technically under the care of the state (Wade 2011). Many of the estimated 3,000 or so unaccompanied migrant individuals who leave the institutional reception care infrastructure in the UK each year (Pinter 2012) ‘transition into illegality’ (Gonzales 2011). Others gain a temporary or indefinite residence permit and go on to follow various pathways of integration. We know that among this group are highly successful individuals (Allsopp et al. 2015), although their trajectories are poorly documented and little has been known until now about their post-18 welfare or wellbeing outcomes (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights 2011; European Commission 2012).

A growing body of evidence suggests that many of the young people who are returned to their countries of origin³ at the end of this bureaucratic ordeal embark on return migration, often setting off once more on smuggling routes (Schuster and Majidi 2013; Gladwell and Elwyn 2012). These young people occupy a paradoxical identity in relation to their EU host states: they are ‘care leavers’ (formerly children under the care of local authorities who have

³ Some former unaccompanied minors are ‘returned’ to assumed or real countries of nationality which they have in reality never known. This is the case, for example, for some Afghans who have grown up in refugee camps or urban environments in Iran or Pakistan before setting off to Europe who are nevertheless deported directly from EU member states to Kabul in Afghanistan (see e.g. Gladwell and Elwynn 2012; Schuster and Majidi 2015).

experienced years of formal integration), and simultaneously unwanted ‘others’ or ‘outsiders’. Many feel a sense of belonging to their European host state and see their future there (Chase 2013a; Allsopp et al. 2015). But, as this thesis documents, the field of dreams and futures is a highly contested domain.

The original contribution of this thesis

Situated at the interdisciplinary cross-roads of refugee studies, migration studies, life course/youth studies and social policy, this research is among the first examples of empirical qualitative comparative research in Europe to explore the trajectories and wellbeing of male migrant youth transitioning towards adulthood. Furthermore, it is original in its exploration of the ways in which young migrants interact with and understand statutory and non-statutory welfare provisions. It is also unique in starting from the perspective of the migrants themselves in its assessment of the relationship between inclusion in and exclusion from the welfare state. Indeed, beyond a few emergent studies of European citizenship and social rights (e.g. Bruzelius et al. 2016), there has been little research to date in the discipline of social policy on what access to welfare, wellbeing and participation (in the welfare state, in social, religious and other communities, and in the labour market) means to migrants themselves (Morris 2002; Soysal 2012; Bloch et al. 2014). The social policy focus on migration has tended rather to adapt a top-down approach (Bloch and Schuster 2002; Spencer 2010; Trauner 2016). Unlike this study, the analysis that exists is rarely gendered – if it does refer to ‘gender’ it employs this as shorthand for the specific experiences of women and girls.⁴

⁴ My chapter on migrant and refugee masculinities is, for example, the only chapter focusing on the experiences of men in the edited volume *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*, edited by Freedman, J., Kivilcim, Z. and Özgür Baklacioğlu, N. (London: Routledge, 2017).

This thesis contributes new knowledge to *how*, *why* and *when* young migrant and refugee men understand and engage with the state – or not – as they come of age; specifically, how they experience and make decisions over time and place and assess risk when faced with shifting rights in relation to welfare, the labour market and immigration control and asylum regimes. It presents this contribution to knowledge in the form of three articles and a book chapter. Two of these have been peer reviewed and published and two remain under peer review at the time of submission.

Becoming Adult

This thesis was written as part of a grant-linked ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) studentship associated with – but independent of – the research project *Becoming Adult*⁵ (Grant ES/L009226/1, PI Dr Elaine Chase, University College London, 2015-2018). I contributed to scoping research – and successful fundraising – for this research as a Research Assistant employed at the Department of Social Policy and Intervention and at the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford between 2014 and 2015 (Chase and Allsopp 2014; Allsopp et al. 2015). Scoping research for this project was funded by the John Fell Fund (Grant: ‘In Protected Limbo: The Wellbeing Outcomes and Trajectories of Former Unaccompanied Migrant Children’, 2014-2015). This earlier work informs the analysis presented in this thesis, although all the empirical evidence and theoretical analysis presented herein – unless otherwise stated – is original.

⁵ For more information see the project website: www.becomingadult.net.

Becoming Adult was the first large-scale research project to explore the experiences of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees in Europe as they transition to adulthood. It included semi-structured interviews with 60 unaccompanied migrant and refugee youth across the UK coupled with in-depth policy analysis and consideration of how the themes of transition to adulthood and migration are depicted in cultural media consumed in countries of origin. The main UK study focused on three countries of origin only: Afghanistan, Eritrea and Albania.

As part of my DPhil, I participated in aspects of the main Becoming Adult research project. These included training courses (for example in Nvivo), cultural workshops and summer schools with research assistants from Afghanistan, Eritrea and Albania. This experience – and conversations with colleagues from the Becoming Adult team – provided an important backdrop to my own independent enquiry. However, the research presented in this thesis is my own work.

In its focus on the experiences of more than 100 young male migrants between the ages of 16 and 25 in two cities, one in England and the other in Italy, this thesis adds value to the main Becoming Adult research project in several important ways. These include: (i) its specific attention to the *gendered* experiences of young men; (ii) the *comparative analysis* across two very different contexts within the EU; (iii) the employment of *ethnographic and artistic mixed methods* in addition to semi-structured interviews to achieve richness of data; (iv) and the collection of an *expanded sample* to include other countries of origin (including, among them Egypt, Sudan and Gambia – see Appendix E for a list of interviewees by country of origin).

Finally, as mentioned above, the study was unusual in its inclusion of *non-asylum seeking migrants* and consideration of pathways to legality that exist through both the asylum system and/or the labour market (in addition to through family reunification and via human rights grounds). Unlike the main Becoming Adult project which focused on unaccompanied young people seeking asylum, this thesis deliberately sought to destabilise the dichotomy between forced and economic migration and to directly address the pressing policy issue of how to understand and manage *mixed* migration flows. This question is addressed in detail in paper two.

The research questions which this thesis addressed are also original. They were decided upon following extensive scoping work conducted both prior to my PhD (Chase and Allsopp 2014) and as part of an extensive literature review which was prepared for my transfer of status in Spring 2015. The prior scoping work included workshops with unaccompanied young migrants and refugees (Allsopp et al. 2015) and a preliminary visit to two possible field sites in Italy and two possible field sites in England in 2015.

Research Questions

This thesis seeks to answer the following key research question:

Key research question: How do unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men in two cities in England and Italy understand statutory and non-statutory forms of welfare *and methods of immigration control* and how and why do they do they interact with these as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?

This key question breaks down into three sub-questions:

Sub-question 1: (i) What are the different types of welfare, both statutory and non-statutory (e.g. state, NGOs, religious organisations, solidarity groups, family, friends and social networks) available to young unaccompanied migrant and refugee men as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?; (ii) and how and why do these young men interact with these support provisions as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?

Sub-question 2: How do different types of statutory and non-statutory welfare, *immigration control* and support provisions shape the decision-making, wellbeing and future trajectories of young unaccompanied migrants and refugee men as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?

Sub-question 3: What other factors shape the decision-making, wellbeing and likely future life projects of young unaccompanied migrants and refugee men as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?

The research questions remained unchanged throughout my research with one important exception. As shown in italics in the main research question and in sub-question two above, I added ‘immigration control’ as a component of my research question, alongside different types of statutory and non-statutory welfare. This was due to the fact that a key finding of this thesis early on was that because of a lack of firewall protections and increased data sharing between government departments and local, regional, national and, in some cases, international authorities, access to formal (and in some cases, informal)

welfare for participants came with costs associated with immigration control. I was aware of this dimension through my scoping research, and that it included fear of detention or deportation among other types of controls (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Schuster 2005), however I had not understood the high degree to which the interaction of welfare services and immigration control had come to shape the coping strategies and life projects of participants. This is a key finding of this research.

Woolf and De Shalit's (2007) conception of 'disadvantage' is employed in this thesis (see article two) – alongside notions of 'risk' (Williams and Baláž 2012; Beck 2005) (see articles one and two) – to theorise the ways in which young men in the research navigated, and made decisions in this context of what I call 'care and control'⁶. Another important finding in relation to this dynamic concerns the increasing incursion of surveillance and immigration control into the realm of informal welfare and informal labour market sectors in both country contexts (see e.g. Allsopp 2016; Allsopp and Manieri 2016 and also article two of this thesis⁷). During fieldwork for this thesis there was widespread ambiguity, for example, as to whether providing shelter to a young person who had 'aged out' of the formal reception system and lost their legal status to reside in Italy or England was a criminal act (Carrera et al. 2016, 2018a, 2018b).

Although all research questions were addressed in this thesis as planned (as shown in Appendix B), the richness of this study's ethnographic data frequently expanded the

⁶ This kind of language is sometimes explicitly used by the immigration support and control architecture as proof of the bleeding together of the two 'care and control' mandates. Campsfield House Immigration Centre, for example, which I visited as part of scoping research for this thesis is run by the private company Mitie. Its slogan which is displayed outside the removal centre on a big sign reads: 'care and custody'.

⁷ This aspect of the research was also informed by work conducted by the author alongside my DPhil for the European Parliament on the criminalisation of assistance to irregular migrants and refugees within the EU. See e.g. Carrera et al. 2015. This is a topic on which I have worked previously – e.g. see Allsopp 2012.

inquiry outwards from the question of interactions between participants and the state and other actors in the welfare mix towards the third sub-research question (what other factors shape how young people construct their life projects over space and time?). The answer was related to the question: what are the life projects of unaccompanied young migrants and refugee men and how are these articulated?

By way of response to this additional, related question, I found that questions of narrative and storytelling were important to understanding the content and realisation of the life projects of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees. Narratives shape their individual and collective capabilities and vulnerabilities, as well as how they understand themselves in relation to society and how likely they are to interact (or not) with the support structures and immigration control apparatuses within it.

I hope to have, in the papers that follow, provided satisfactory answers to all dimensions of the original social policy research questions, in addition to shedding light on this related dimension. Certainly, as with all good research questions, throughout my research they have prompted many further questions which I hope to address in future research. These are discussed at the end of this thesis in the Conclusion.

Form of the Thesis

I thought long and hard about how to present in a succinct and digestible format the immensely rich volume of research conducted for this PhD. My choice to pursue the thesis by publication route available in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford was shaped by two main factors.

Firstly, in many respects, this thesis marks the start of a new line of inquiry as much as the conclusion of a previous one, since the data gathered will feed into a range of other outputs. As part of a wider community of social scientists working with the Becoming Adult research project, I have the opportunity to publish my research on the topic of wellbeing as co-author (with Elaine Chase) of a monograph, *The Politics of Wellbeing in Transition*. I also aim to publish other findings which speak to the gendered dimensions of this research in a single authored monograph, *Bordering Masculinities: Europe's 'New Vulnerable'*. This book will draw on data gathered for this thesis alongside data gathered for previous research. The latter includes the observation of 25 asylum appeals for former unaccompanied minors; interviews with border officials, support workers and civil society actors across the EU; and time spent in another European country shadowing border guards at an air border. The book will focus on the gendering of the European border – its construction at the level of governance and everyday bureaucracy and bordering practices, in addition to young migrants' experiences of this.

Secondly, at a time at which the question of unaccompanied youth migration to Europe has been at the top of the national and international policy agenda, pursuing the route of writing a thesis via publications has allowed me to speak to public policy and academic debates and to present important new data in real time. Among other outputs, the data have fed into UK, Italian and EU-level parliamentary inquiries into the situation of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees arriving in Europe, as well as contributing to a series of guidelines and operational best practice notes by non-governmental bodies including Médecins Sans Frontières and the European Platform on Integration and Migration (EPIM).

Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured as follows: the rest of this Introduction outlines the theoretical background and provides an overview of the research design and methodology. Some ethical issues and the framework for the analysis of the data are also considered. More detail on each of these areas is given in each of the subsequent papers that follow, along with literature reviews tailored to each theme. I also give more thought to the strengths and limitations of the research in the Conclusion. Appendix C illustrates how each of the four papers address the respective research questions.

The first article, ‘Best Interests, Durable Solutions and Belonging: Policy Discourses Shaping the Futures of Unaccompanied Migrant and Refugee Minors Coming of Age in Europe’, is co-authored with Elaine Chase (more than 70% of the work was my own). This article has already been published in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. It primarily addresses research sub-questions one and two. Through a critical analysis of three prevailing frames (‘best interests’, ‘durable solutions’ and belonging), which largely inform policy and practice related to this group, it explores the tension between policy assumptions and what we know of the lived experiences and aspirations of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees in Europe.

The paper finds that young people’s migration strategies and life projects are complex. However, they are generally based around four intersecting motives: (i) safety, (ii) work, (iii) education and/or (iv) family reunification/private life (see Appendix E).

The analysis presented in the first paper reveals a policy framework shaped by a state-centric view of migration, a static conception of belonging and a bias towards a political preference for return. Such a stance, it is argued, underestimates young people's agency and willingness to embrace risk in their efforts to secure a viable future. The net result is policy which fails to offer a 'durable solution' or act in the 'best interests' of either the individual migrant young people themselves or society as a whole.

The second article, 'English Iron Rod Welfare versus Italian Colander Welfare: How Unaccompanied Minors Challenge the Myth of a Common Asylum Policy in Europe', is currently under review by the *Journal of European Social Policy*. This article develops the policy focus of the first article and addresses all three research sub-questions. It examines how young people's subjective conceptions of their best interests interact with policy structures and other forms of governance in their lives to create certain outcomes which are identified as related to England and Italy's different welfare and immigration control regimes.

The paper demonstrates how unaccompanied young minors and refugees experience the welfare-immigration policy nexus in different ways across the two countries over time. I outline the differences between the systems of England and Italy and the ways in which these are experienced by participants as 'iron rod welfare' in England, and 'colander welfare' in Italy. Three structural factors distinguish the two: (i) the nature of the labour market and opportunities for regularisation; (ii) the generosity and role of the state in the welfare mix; and (iii) the intersection between welfare provision and immigration enforcement (dynamics of 'care and control').

Traditional welfare typologies are revealed to fall short in accounting for the experiences of participants in a number of key ways. Firstly, they fail to take account of shifting categorisations and of how the stratification of social rights plays out chronologically. Secondly, they tend to employ static models which fail to consider how young migrants move in and out of categories and between places over time, including in relation to the labour market. Thirdly, they give inadequate attention to the increasing intersection of welfare access and immigration control. It is demonstrated that this last aspect is a particularly significant component of how welfare is experienced for this group and a key determinant of whether they ‘go missing’ and of how they interact with statutory and non-statutory welfare over time.

The second article further explores the tensions (again explored in papers one and four) concerning how the young men in the research navigated their subjective life projects and the societal opportunity structures for self-realisation available to them in the two specific contexts over time. Specifically, the paper explores how the different welfare, labour market and asylum and immigration control policies in Italy and England interacted with the four types of life project outlined in article one: (i) safety, (ii) work, (iii) education and (iv) private life/family and social network reunification.

Paper three is a book chapter which is published in the volume *A Gendered Approach to the Syrian Refugee Crisis* (edited by Jane Freedman, Zeynep Kivilcim, Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu and published by Palgrave, 2017). The paper focuses in on the gendered and racialised nature of participants’ experiences coming of age as young migrant and refugee men in Italy and England at the time of the research. The paper shows how these experiences are related to other intersecting aspects of their identity which are discussed in the first two

articles. These include their age, country of origin and respective positions vis-a-vis the welfare-asylum regimes. Like paper two, this paper also seeks to address all three sub-questions.

The chapter explores how, over the course of the so-called European ‘refugee crisis’, within popular media narratives the traditional trope of militarised masculinity was set against the figures of both ‘man as provider’ on the one hand and ‘threatening young male’ on the other. The paper argues that for some men, the decision to flee is a decision to protect their families and to avoid staying to participate in violence. Others flee war, only to find new manifestations of it at Europe’s many borders. The narratives of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees and other male groups of migrants frequently betray a vulnerability which not only challenges subjective ideas of manhood and strength but also reveals the fallibility of the militarised nation state system in which it has been argued by previous scholars (e.g. Cockburn 2007) that masculinity finds its most violent manifestation.

The paper demonstrates that masculinity in this context is fluid and intersectional. Hegemonic tropes are traceable to the legal and social constructs that migrants face upon arrival in the EU in the form of the welfare, labour market and asylum systems, as well as being authored, or perpetuated, by the migrant men themselves.

I conclude that a more intersectional approach to refugee masculinities is required which recognises the gender-specific displacement experiences of boys and men and acknowledges that they cannot be cast as either victims or soldiers but should be seen as at once vulnerable and agentic. The paper provides important context to the integration of gender within the analytical framework of the thesis.

The fourth and final paper, “‘The Story is in the Telling’: Thematic Narratives, Time and Truth in the Life Projects of Unaccompanied Young Migrants and Refugees’, is currently under review by the journal *Ethnography*. It addresses research sub-questions two and three, focusing on young people’s lived experiences and the ways in which stories are told as a means to construct a bridge between the self and the ‘other’. Stories, it is argued, serve to help situate the young people in relationships of proximity to or distance from the state and wider society. The article includes examples of how this is manifested in encounters with the welfare and asylum nexus, as well as in the research encounter itself. The article includes a critical reflection on my own positionality as a white, young, British/European researcher in the ‘field’ at a time of acute political tension and opportunity in Europe vis-a-vis migration.

More generally, the paper asks: how do young people conceive of their life projects and seek to maintain a sense of ontological security as they navigate the structural obstacles identified in papers one, two and three? The mixed methodology employed in the research as well as the narrative approach to analysis are discussed in detail.

This final paper concludes that narrative is important in understanding the life projects of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees, their capabilities and vulnerabilities, as well as how they understand themselves in relation to society and how likely they are to interact (or not) with the welfare support structures and immigration control apparatuses within it. Five main narrative genres are discussed that were commonly encountered in the course of the research: (i) tragedy, (ii) epic, (iii) comedy, (iv) confession; and (v) fantasy. The article problematises the value of ‘truth’ in these narratives and concludes that storytelling is fundamentally linked to the sense of ontological security that has been demonstrated by prior

scholarship (Chase 2013a, 2013b) to be vital to the subjective wellbeing of these young people.

The thesis ends with a detailed conclusion which sums up the findings of the thesis and draws out some key emerging themes from across the papers that merit further examination. These include the relationship between the individual and the collective in migratory life projects and the emotional and relational lives of young refugees. I reflect critically on some of the limitations of the research and identify areas for further inquiry going forward. The policy implications of the research are also considered throughout the conclusion and three new rights are put forward for unaccompanied young migrants and refugees.

To summarise, this thesis brings nuance to discussions of young people's agency and of how they lean in and out of institutional and other forms of care and control over time in pursuing goals linked to life projects of their own and/or their families' making. Importantly, the thesis considers the gendered impacts of policies from the perspective of young men who constitute the overwhelming majority of new irregular migrant and refugee arrivals to the EU.

Theoretical Background

Read as a whole, this thesis applies a fresh theoretical framework to our understanding of the experiences of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men. This theoretical framework does not have, at its centre, the traditional legalistic conception that appears in most academic literature and policy discussions on this subject of the young person as an atomised

‘unaccompanied minor’ or ‘former minor’ claiming individual rights against a hostile state⁸. Rather, the analysis presented in this thesis starts from an understanding of the young person as a relational being, as one situated in an inter-subjective world that is frequently shifting. Participants in the research are seen throughout as in a state of becoming – ‘becoming *adult*’ among many other shifting subject-object relations and positions.

The ‘unaccompanied’ young migrant as a relational being: connecting the self and society

In this context, the very term ‘unaccompanied’, though unquestionably useful in policy terms as a shorthand, is problematic for the ways in which it obscures the transnational and localised social, cultural, economic, emotional and familial/relational networks in which participants were situated. Articles one and two demonstrate how young people strategically move in and out of relationships of proximity and distance within these spheres as they seek to move ahead, often not just in spite of the state, but also – as in the case of avoiding detention or deportation – actively *because of it* (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Schuster 2005; De Genova and Peutz 2010).

Understanding young people’s wider relationships and social networks in the context of the mixed economy of welfare is important. This is because it is in relation to these different networks that they situate themselves when making decisions related to their own welfare and wellbeing, and when pursuing calculated strategies of visibility or invisibility vis-à-vis the state which has – for them – formal responsibility (Kohli 2005; Wells 2011; Bankston III C L 2014).

⁸ Although I recognise that in some situations this narrative may be the most fitting or strategically important.

Placing narrative at the centre of my methodology and framework for analysis highlights the intersubjective field and the power of storytelling to help young people to identify capabilities moving forward, and to move away from an isolated position of ‘unaccompaniedness’. As Jackson notes:

‘stories...disclose not just “who” we are, but “what” we have in common with others, not just “who” we think we are but “what” shared circumstances bear upon our lives and our fate (2013: 16).’

Such an approach relates to my ongoing work with Chase mapping and (re)defining the ‘capabilities’ (Sen 2005) of former unaccompanied minors (Chase, forthcoming).

More generally, the thesis advances our understanding of how people experience and interact with social policies, including the unintended consequences of such policies. It also advances our general understanding of the under-theorised relationships between welfare regimes, labour markets, and asylum and immigration regimes.

Terminology and definitions

This research has been guided by a grounded theory approach throughout. Glaser and Strauss explain the process of using grounded theory thus:

‘in discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept’ ((1999]2017): 23).

This theoretical method is especially useful for small-scale, qualitative case studies such as this.

In keeping with this method, I adopt the following definitions, based on how I observed young people themselves understanding and interacting with the state and its various institutional manifestations and apparatuses over the course of the research:

Migrants and refugees: Because the states within which participants were located made profound distinctions between an asylum seeker and a refugee, on occasion in the analysis that follows I also make a distinction between them in order to illustrate points. Where possible, however, these terms are used in keeping with participants' own ideas about their migratory life projects which were often revealed to be a combination of seeking safety and other factors such as work, education and family or social network reunification (see articles one and two). Generally, I use the term 'refugee' rather than 'asylum seeker' to refer to those who are in the asylum system, those granted refugee status and those who self-define as refugees. This is in keeping with the legal term 'refugee' according to the 1967 Protocol of the 1951 Geneva Convention, which states that the term is declaratory – serving to recognise a pre-existing state rather than existing as a bureaucratic label to be assigned as and when.

Life project: The idea of the life project is conceived according to the institutional definition articulated in EU and national policy instruments (as explored in article one), but also taking into account participants' own conceptions of their decision-making and aspirations in relation to their migration (see papers two, three and four). Life projects are also understood as gendered (see paper three of this thesis).

Welfare: The range of statutory or non-statutory/informal support services related to the provision of – or access to – housing, education, healthcare and other social rights. Here welfare is linked to wellbeing, to encompass both a subjective and an objective element and both formal and informal access to social rights according to the welfare mix in each research context (see article two). The understanding of subjective wellbeing employed in this study gives specific attention to the importance for migrant and refugee young people of having a sense of projected self (a life project) oriented towards the future as a key component of ‘ontological security’ (Chase 2013a; 2012b; Allsopp et al. 2015). In article two, meanwhile, traditional welfare typologies used in social policy are discussed and shown to fall short in accounting for the subjective experiences of this young and mobile group.

Labour market regime: Possibilities for formal and informal employment as well as possibilities for regularisation of legal status linked to labour market participation. The labour market was revealed in the research to be commonly understood as an aspect of welfare among young men and those who supported them. It provided different opportunity structures across the two country contexts (see article two).

Asylum and immigration control regime: Institutional arrangements and possibilities to obtain legal status. This also includes the relationship of proximity/distance and conditionality between access to social rights and immigration control. I define the latter as the perceived and real risk that accessing social rights through statutory or non-statutory forms of welfare will make someone subject to the apparatus of immigration control, including detention and deportation.

Research Design

As detailed above, this DPhil builds on a small body of existing research in this area to which I have contributed through scoping work conducted between 2012 and 2015 (Chase 2013, 2013b; Chase and Allsopp 2014; Allsopp et al. 2015; Gill et al. 2015, 2018). I also draw on background knowledge of the issues involved that is garnered from several years of working and volunteering with NGOs and youth organisations supporting migrants to access welfare and humanitarian assistance in the UK (2010 – 2015). The research design was justified and implemented as follows:

Justification for comparative research: Several factors make systematic comparative analysis difficult in relation to my research questions, primarily the fact that a range of inconsistent policy practices are in operation across diverse levels of governance: at the European level, country level (in the UK context) and local level (Italy and to a lesser extent the UK) (European Migration Network 2010). This research therefore adopts Clasen's definition of comparative research as 'research which systematically investigates one or more phenomena in two or more countries or 'nations' as *given contexts* for actors and institutions' (2013: 2 – own italics).

The research does not seek to make systematic generalisations about young migrants' experiences in Italy or in England. Rather, these nation states – in their historical, political and institutional specificities – provide one of several intersecting contextual aspects of comparison. The research follows a localised, qualitative case study tradition which has emerged in social policy since the 1990s to shed light on everyday experiences of implementation and practices of social policy (see Daly 2003).

I refer to England rather than the UK throughout in recognition that in some social policy areas, such as access to higher education, powers in the UK are devolved. This leads, for example, to different rules governing higher education provisions for former unaccompanied minors in Scotland and England. Another important difference concerns the fact that in Scotland a legal guardian is appointed for all unaccompanied minors, whereas at the time of research this was not the case in England.

Ethnographic method: Individuals are the primary unit of analysis for this research. Across the four papers, the research methodology and analysis consistently work outwards from the ground up, from young people's lived experiences to the structures in which they are situated and in which they situate themselves. I adopt a grounded, or inductive, approach to theory based on observation (Glaser and Strauss [1999]2017). As Mabbett and Bolderson (2013: 51) describe it: 'the approach is systematic yet open in its approach to gathering comparative material'.

In keeping with the grounded theory approach and the ethnographic method, I employed some flexibility in terms of how far the analysis moved out geographically. The research is informed by my recognition of the enduring importance of national policy frameworks, and in particular of both the symbolic and very real violent impacts of border controls on individuals' lived experiences (Joppke 2006; Abizadeh 2010; De Genova and Peutz 2010; Andersson 2014; Bloch and Schuster 2012). It is also informed by a desire to avoid 'methodological nationalism' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2008). Methodological nationalism takes for granted the state as a primary epistemological frame. I seek to avoid this by adopting, across all four papers, an understanding of multiple and fluid identities and forms

of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011). I also integrate transnational and collective networks within considerations of welfare and wellbeing (see papers two and three in particular).

Choice of field sites

This study adopts a multidimensional model of comparison that maximises variation while also maintaining some common variables (such as countries of origin, age range, gender, urban location). My choice of city-level field sites – Rome in Italy, and Leicester in England – was made in keeping with Crow’s analysis that ‘there is much that is missed, both above and below the level of the state, by taking an exclusively state-centered approach’ (2013: 91). Most unaccompanied minors live in cities – hence the choice of cities rather than rural locations.

There are advantages and disadvantages to working at the city level. On the one hand, this approach allowed for detailed case studies to be collected and situated in rich ethnographic detail. On the other, the generalisability of data was compromised by local peculiarities and specificities. Italy and England were chosen as national contexts for five main reasons; on the grounds, again, of both commonalities and differences. These were the following:

Significant populations of unaccompanied young migrants with distinct pre-and post-18 policy regimes: Both England and Italy are host to thousands of unaccompanied minors.

Another common denominator is that both have a welfare provision landscape which shifts the entitlements significantly for this group as they approach adulthood or ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, at the age of 18 (Allsopp et al. 2015).

Type of welfare and immigration regime: Italy and England have different political ideologies of welfare and different traditions of immigration. This provides the setting for different potential trajectories for inclusion as well as shaping the context for different types of exclusion (see article two).

Type of policy specific to unaccompanied young migrants and refugees in transition to adulthood: Both Italy and England are party to EU law and policy on unaccompanied minors, yet they have two different ‘types’ of policies and practices in relation to this group which exemplify variation in practice more broadly across Europe (European Migration Network 2010; EU Fundamental Rights Agency 2011; Chase and Allsopp 2014). This variation includes the levels at which policies concerning this group are governed; the ways in which unaccompanied minors are typically institutionalised (e.g. as asylum seekers (minors) in England versus unaccompanied minors and unaccompanied asylum seeking minors in Italy); and the options open to them as they turn 18 (the possibility of extending one’s permit in Italy until the age of 19, if one can show potential for accessing the labour market and/or vocational and higher education versus the stark lack of such an opportunity in England – again, see article two).

Mobility between countries: In relation to cross-country research in social policy, Clasen has commented that:

‘growing interdependence between and similar challenges across countries, but not necessarily policy responses, have put into question social policy research which remains locked into analysing developments within one country’ (2013: 3).

This is especially true of European social policy research in the field of migration. Scoping work for this research conducted in 2014 and 2015 suggested the existence of an important level of mobility and secondary migration both between Italy and England and between England and Italy. This is confirmed by the research (in papers one and two). These shifting ‘mobility biographies’ (Franberg 2014) represent an important new development in European migration patterns. Indeed, the perceived presence of the state as a force of regulation, control, surveillance and potential violence (through detention or deportation) – and how this shapes secondary migration across both regions and nation states – is an important aspect that has been under-explored in prior research (Andersson 2014). The fact that young migrants make choices informed by how easy it is to evade the state once they become undocumented, and adopt strategies of ‘visibility or invisibility’, is nevertheless documented in some prior research (Allsopp et al. 2015; Chase 2010; Bloch et al. 2012, 2014; Gonzales 2011).

Common countries of origin: Although the main countries of origin for unaccompanied minors vary between England and Italy, certain groups, such as Afghans, Albanians and Eritreans, are common between them (Eurostat 2013). This allows for consideration of difference in countries of origin, whilst also allowing for some element of comparability according to country of origin. It also allows for comparative insights with the main UK-based ESRC ‘Becoming Adult’ study to which this DPhil contributed. My forthcoming book, co-authored with Elaine Chase, for example, focuses primarily on individuals from Afghanistan, Eritrea and Albania.

Language and familiarity: Finally, I had rich connections in England and Italy and am fluent in both English and Italian. This helped me to secure access to participants in the two field contexts. An important bias in my research was my starting point of greater familiarity with

the English context, having worked as researcher and support worker in this setting for some eight years prior to beginning the research, as well as being British myself. My position as an outsider field researcher in Italy was very different, for example, from that in my native Britain, where participants approached me with much more suspicion. I mitigated this risk by conducting more interviews with policy stakeholders in Italy to better understand the context. Although this data appears as background in much of this thesis, rather than being foregrounded, it was essential to my knowledge and analysis. Moreover, I hope to write a paper based on the rich data I have on the experiences and coping strategies of support workers elsewhere.

Methodology

I pursued a range of strategies that sought to acknowledge and in some ways counter aspects of my subjective bias in the research. Taking seriously Lubet's (2017) challenge to make ethnographic research more 'evidence-based', I employed several of his recommendations. These included, among others, (i) rigorous fact checking; (ii) re-visitations and re-interviews; and (iii) triangulation of different sources of data. I also shared (anonymised) parts of my field notes directly with colleagues for discussion, and compared my findings with others embarked on similar endeavours.

The research conducted for this thesis comprised four integrated methodological elements which are listed in the timetable for the research in Appendix A: i) critical policy analysis; ii) participant observation/ethnography; iii) narrative interviews; and iv) elite interviews. Appendix B shows how each method relates to the four papers and Appendix C shows how the research questions are answered in the different parts of this thesis.

The justification for the different methods is as follows:

Critical policy analysis: Because this research adopted a multilevel governance approach to the study of immigration and welfare policy making and practice, it included critical analysis of a range of policy documents pertaining to policies that govern the lives of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men and at the local, national and regional levels. The purpose of this stage of research was firstly, to determine the different policy pathways relevant to unaccompanied young migrants' and refugees' experiences and life projects, and secondly, to assess the ideas that inform the policies, bureaucratic practices and encounters between young migrants and those who are in a position to implement – or help them to evade – policy norms (see articles one and two). The critical policy analysis followed the interpretive policy analysis tradition. This approach foregrounds the fact that policies are 'informed by ontological and epistemological presuppositions deriving from interpretive philosophies' (Yanow 2007: 110-111). It is therefore grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and literary theories in way that fits with overall text-based and narrative approach to analysis employed throughout this thesis.

Policy analysis involved coding the policy documents according to key normative themes and operational principles, as well as detailing recommended processes and bureaucratic procedures. This analysis served as a point of comparison with what was observed in practice on the ground during the fieldwork. Analysis was presented to a group of policy experts for feedback and refinement. A basic table summarising the main differences between the English and Italian policy contexts is given in article two (p115).

Participant observation/ethnography: The study adopted ethnography as its second method of inquiry. Because of the focus on young people's lived experiences, participant observation was seen as being of primary importance. The choice of method was informed by my background understanding of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1986) and in particular of the phenomenological importance of discourse, narrative and language in social policy and in refugee and migration studies. Zetter (1991, 2007), for example, has drawn attention to the importance of bureaucratic labelling practices in determining policy pathways and wellbeing outcomes among refugees and migrants. Understanding the following institutional procedures is therefore of particular relevance: the placement of young people in policy categories; the management of transitions between these over time; and textual and narrative practices within the performance of both identity and bureaucracy (see papers three and four of this thesis). Smith explains the relevance of ethnography as a method for exploring people's lived experiences of social policies thus:

‘[W]orking from people's experience of their own doings, knitting different perspectives and positions together, and exploring text-based forms of organization provide a means of constructing representations of how things work ... through such analysis we can arrive at an organic understanding of power, of intentions, desires, opportunities, impediments, blockages and powerlessness’ (2005: 183).

For the participant observation/ethnography, I spent eight and nine months respectively volunteering at three support centres for unaccompanied migrants and refugees, one in Leicester in England, and two in Rome in Italy (one for undocumented migrants in transit who were primarily Eritrean, and the other for documented unaccompanied minors who were

staying, at least for a while, in Italy). In both sites, my participation included collaborating with museums on a series of art workshops and exhibitions. The relatively long length of time spent in each field location was important to build trust with participants and to observe how life projects changed over time and in response to the range of possible factors identified in the research questions. I provided everyday assistance with tasks which included cooking, cleaning and providing basic advice on matters such as transport or leisure, homework and English language support. I discuss the strengths and limitations of these methods more in the Conclusion.

A Memorandum of Understanding was formalised between myself and each of the host organisations which listed my tasks, the aims and objectives of the research and ground rules should any safeguarding or other issues arise (see Appendix K for an example). Where possible, I accompanied individual young people to appointments, such as age assessments and housing visits, to help me to develop an overall picture of the welfare, asylum and immigration control systems. Being based at the centres also provided one route for accessing potential research participants for interviews. Participant observation led to a combination of key and peripheral participants, as well as serving as a source of data in itself through the collected of detailed field notes and individual profiles.

Arts-based methodologies: Arts-based activities conducted as part of the fieldwork included painting; modelling; museum visits and the creation of ‘museums of self’ in which participants would put objects of importance to their lives (see Appendices G, H and I for examples of these methods). I designed the ‘museum of self’ method myself with participants in response to their enthusiasm following visits to museums in both field locations. The art-based methods sought to employ an anti-oppressive approach as

recommended by Capous-Desyllas M and Morgaine K (2018). There were clear limitations to this which are discussed in the Strengths and Limitations section of the Conclusion.

Sometimes I led workshops; sometimes I was an assistant or I co-facilitated them. The arts were used as a way of soliciting narratives rather than being interpreted as data in and of themselves (Bagnoli 2009; Banks 2008; Drew and Guillemin 2014). This was because, (among other considerations) I am not trained in the interpretation of visual data.

In total, approximately 40 young people participated in art workshops (20 in Italy and 20 in England), some of whom were also interviewees. In both sites, art workshops were conducted with the support of partner organisations. I have anonymised these and all participants in the research throughout this thesis using pseudonyms. Art exhibitions were held in both field research locations and booklets were published as part of a collaborative output funded by the EU (in Rome) and by a local museum and the Becoming Adult research project (in Leicester).⁹

Semi-structured interviews: 58 narrative interviews on the topic of life projects were conducted with unaccompanied migrants between the ages of 16 and 25 in Rome and Leicester (a table of interview participants is included in Appendix E). I maintained contact with a diverse sub-sample of several interviewees over time via social media and telephone and conducted a series of follow-up interviews with ten participants (5 in each location) to record a sense of change over place and time. A precedent for maintaining contact overseas through these methods was established by documentary film maker Margreth Olin, in

⁹ The Italian art booklet is available in an online format here: https://www.academia.edu/35484606/Narrazioni_da_Museo_a_Museo_Trasformazioni_Migranti_tra_MAXXI_e_Museo_Pigorini.

addition to my own practice during my experience as a youth worker with a group of young migrants in England. I followed the guidance for maintaining contact in longitudinal research with young participants provided by McDowall (2001) and Thomson et al. (2004).

While the participant observation/ethnographic stage of the research was diachronic (that is, occurring in one site and then the other) the narrative interviews were also in some ways synchronic (going back and forwards between the two – see Appendix A for a timetable of the research). The interview methodology was modelled on the design for the main *Becoming Adult* ESRC research project.

Follow-up interviews brought added methodological challenges, for where a young person had shared a dream or aspiration with me at one point, they may have been reluctant to reveal that they had been unsuccessful in progressing with this at the next stage (McDowell 2001). At other times, young people gave different accounts at each interview and these were hard to piece together in a coherent narrative. I made space for this lack of coherence, seeking to avoid the silencing of difference through the imposition of unity on narratives that are by their nature fragmented (see paper four). Such fragmented, ‘unfinished’ or aborted narratives were reported by numerous young people in precarious circumstances, with important implications for their subjective wellbeing and sense of ontological security (Chase 2013a). This thesis takes as its primary source material the narratives I was told by my respondents and I treat them as such – as expressing deep emotional realities, even if they are not close to factual truth, and even if they are liable to lapse into delusion and self-delusion. The challenges of interpreting narrative data are discussed in articles two and four of this thesis as well as in the Conclusion.

Research assistants in Rome and Leicester assisted in highlighting ‘hard-to-reach’ interviewees (such as those outside of the care system) through snowball sampling. In Leicester, I worked with a research assistant (Habib Rezai) appointed by the Becoming Adult project. In Rome, I recruited a research assistant (Yusif Tahiru) who was paid through vouchers in keeping with the main Becoming Adult research ethics and methodology. Both Rezai and Tahiru also played an important role in shaping the impact outputs from this research. These included a song and music video, in addition to the three-minute animation *Dear Habib*¹⁰ which narrates the life project of one Afghan participant. These outputs are discussed in paper four and in the Conclusion.

In both field locations, I sought out participants who had a range of levels of contact with institutional support, as well as those embedded within institutions so as to maximise variability. Research assistants and participants were offered vouchers for their time, funded from a fieldwork grant.

I conducted the interviews in English, French and Italian in which I am fluent. In some, I also employed my basic Arabic language skills. All translations in this thesis are my own.¹¹

Interviews were either audio-recorded or typed/hand-written then transcribed. I occasionally relied on interpreters for Arabic, Amharic and Tigrinya. Where appropriate (for example, if the participant was particularly shy, or fluency of language was an issue) I complemented the interviews with participatory methods using photos, maps, diagrams, lifelines (timelines),

¹⁰ This animation, produced with the assistance of the company Positives-Negatives, is available, along with an accompanying comic and educational materials, at the following link:

<https://becomingadult.net/2018/06/18/dear-habib-the-true-story-of-a-former-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-child/>

¹¹ I trained in translation as part of a BA in Modern Languages (2006-2010). This included four modules on French and Italian translation.

artefacts or proverbs, as has been the practice in past biographical narrative studies with young people (Giorgi and Fasulo 2013; Hendersen et al 2006). It was common for young people to take out their phones and show me photographs spontaneously as part of explaining their life projects.

Interviews with welfare and support providers and officials: Again, replicating the methodology of the main Becoming Adult research project, interviews were conducted with welfare and support providers and officials and policy officials within the domain of child care and immigration and asylum control (25 in Italy and 2 in England). My English sample was complemented by 12 interviews conducted for the main Becoming Adult project, so as to avoid duplication (see Appendix F). This served as a source of information for all three research questions and allowed for triangulation of research findings. Because of the emphasis on young people's narratives and issues of capacity, one limitation of this thesis is that it has not provided sufficient space to do justice to the interviews with service providers and policy stakeholders. I hope to rectify this in future analysis and outputs.

Analysis of Data

Throughout the ethnographic stage of my research, the grounded theory approach to the analysis of data (see above) was complemented by Smith's IPA approach (Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis). Smith summarises this approach thus (2008: 53): 'the participants are trying to make sense of their world', while 'the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world.' As Scott Jones and Watt describe it:

‘IPA takes a phenomenological approach though a double hermeneutic that is both questioning and, importantly, empathetic, and seeks to achieve an “insider” view that accurately reflects and respects how individuals make sense of and attribute meaning to their personal and social worlds’ (2010: 168).

Analysis of my interview data also drew on an integrated biographical narrative analysis approach. Narrative analysis, like narrative method, is primarily concerned with the relationship between events and how people understand, explain, come to understand and organise experience (Wiles et al. 2005; Clandinin and Connelly 2000). It considers narratives to be the means through which people make sense of the world. In particular, I drew on theories of ‘critical moments’ (Thomson et al. 2002), ‘turning points’ (Holmegaarda et al. 2012) and ‘fateful moments’ (Giddens 2001). Because of the importance of narrative, transcripts were read and analysed as ‘wholes’ and, where follow-up interviews took place, as ‘sequences’. Each interview was then coded for broader comparative analysis, as well as being assigned one or more of a series of narrative genres (tragedy, epic, comedy, confession and fantasy – see article four and Appendix E). This mixed narrative/thematic coding approach was informed by the relative success of the ‘cross-sectional’ analytical approach employed in the influential *Inventing Adulthoods* study of British youth transitions (Thomson et al. 2004). It also echoes the dual analytical approach employed in ‘Young Lives’, the longitudinal survey of childhood and youth poverty based at the University of Oxford (Morrow 2013)¹². This mixed analytical strategy allowed me to situate individual experience in a wider structural context in order to ensure its widest possible relevance (Thomson and Holland 2003).

¹² See project website: <http://www.younglives.org.uk/>.

I used NVivo 11.1.1 to store and code my data, creating a priori and emergent codes to thematically analyse them. For the young people (but not for the welfare and support providers and officials, for whom I just conducted thematic coding), this was coupled with narrative analyses. Each thematic node was contextualised alongside a summary of the young person's migratory project, including their past, key facts about their life, the main objective(s) of migration, the dominant narrative genre(s) in which they recounted their life project, and their interaction with statutory and other sources of welfare and aspirations (see Appendix E). Using framework type analysis, I cross-checked the themes/subthemes against different kinds of interviewee to deduce some general observations. The limitations of my methods – including this approach to analysis – are discussed in the Conclusion.

Ethics

This research received ethical approval from the University of Oxford and host organizations. A thorough ethical review was critical, since the research raised important ethical questions, some of which are discussed in papers three and four. These pertain to participants' ages (some were minors aged between 16 and 18) and to their potential vulnerability (most had experienced some form of persecution, forced labour and/or violence, among other human rights abuses). A range of unforeseen ethical issues were also encountered in the research and dealt with on a case-by-case basis. This was done with the support of partner organisations and following flow charts which were approved with my University ethics application. These flow charts were shared with host and partner institutions and continuously re-drawn according to changing opportunities, networks and knowledge, as advised by Alderson and Morrow (2011).

Some unforeseen ethical issues included the following:

Voice: While on the one hand I had anticipated that some participants would be undocumented and not wish to be identified, I did not anticipate the extent of the ethical obligation I felt to give research participants ‘voice’ – that is opportunities to speak for themselves. This raised a financial challenge, for example, in terms of paying for art materials and for participants’ travel to events alongside me when I was invited to speak. This was mitigated in part through funds made available via the main Becoming Adult research project and other fieldwork grants from my University, alongside the support of partner institutions and museums. Throughout these collaborations, I sought to maintain my academic independence, according to the terms of the Memoranda of Understanding (MOU’s). Ethical questions pertaining to my own positionality and participation bias are discussed in more detail in paper four and in the Conclusion.

Changing geo-political context: Planning for the research took place before the dramatic increase in refugee movements to the EU in 2015. This raised several ethical challenges for the research as well as presenting new opportunities.

Firstly, because of the extreme and unforeseen demands placed on the reception infrastructure in Rome at the time of the research in Italy, I was compelled to volunteer my services in situations that I had not foreseen, and in which the anticipated solutions of referring vulnerable individuals to other actors was not always possible. I used my previous experience as a refugee youth and NGO worker to navigate some of these difficult situations. Because of the growing criminalisation of assistance to irregular migrants in Italy and England, it was not always clear whether my actions placed me on the right side of the law.

This led to difficult ethical dilemmas, which I discuss elsewhere (see e.g. Allsopp 2017b). In the light of these unforeseen challenges, following the research, when transcribing and analysing data, I experienced and was treated by the National Health Service (NHS) for symptoms of vicarious (secondary) trauma.

Age: I had anticipated that participants might say that they were younger than they were as part of strategies to access certain social rights. However, I had not anticipated that they might reveal to me that they were in fact minors when they had chosen to place themselves in institutional structures designed for adults. This was the strategy of one participant in Italy who sought to access more independence, as discussed in paper four. In addition to continuously renegotiating consent with individual participants, I maintained strict boundaries of confidentiality within and with the NGOs with whom I was volunteering. I did not share information about participants directly with the NGOs unless the individuals had given prior consent. All efforts were made to keep findings anonymised and data secured. This was detailed in a data protection plan approved by my University ethics committee. I drew on my significant prior experience of conducting research with unaccompanied migrant youth in the UK to inform my ethical principles and practices at all times.

Positionality and Reflexivity

Relational methodology, which recognises that stories and knowledge are co-created (Jackson 2013), was shown to be a crucial determinant of the quality of the data gathered and an ethical imperative of the research. With this in mind, it is important to note that while the arguments presented in this thesis have been driven forward by rigorous and

rich empirical and theoretical work, this thesis is unquestionably shaped by my position as a white, feminist, European academic with a primarily left-wing view of the world.

‘Positionality’ refers to this: my subject position ‘in the field’ and throughout the research planning and analysis. This terminology draws on feminist methodologies that invite us as researchers to encounter people ‘from where we stand’ (Cockburn 2007; Behar 2014) as well as considering the position of our participants.

A ‘distant–formal’ research relationship?

I sought to display reflexivity throughout the research, acknowledging the ‘connection, intellectual and emotional, between the observer and the observed’ (Behar 2014: 14). I am conscious, however, that dwelling upon these interpersonal elements and indulging in too much introspection risks taking valuable space from documenting the young people’s experiences. This thesis, with its focus on storytelling and life projects, poses the inevitable questions: how can one still recognise one’s role as interlocutor without overshadowing the very subject of analysis; and how can we include ourselves in the research without relegating participants to a peripheral position in yet another narrative that is *beyond them*, like the asylum interview itself?

My approach to reflexivity drew on the suggestion from McCleod and Yates (1997) of a ‘distant–formal’ research relationship in order to avoid the traps of ‘hyper-reflexivity’ and ‘relentless introspection’ in the research process. Thomason and Holland (2003) reflect on their successful adoption of this approach in their longitudinal study of youth transitions in the UK thus:

‘We neither sought to make an intervention into young people’s lives, nor denied that we might well be doing so. We recognized that it is not a “normal” part of young people’s lives to be invited to participate in regular in-depth interviews by researchers from a university, and that the impact of the research process would have to be addressed in the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation’ (239).

But this was not always easy. I kept a field journal for the purpose of reflexivity, to record notes and to keep profiles of individuals (McDowall 2001) as well as noting how I situated myself in the field. A few considerations from this are detailed in what follows.

The research as actor or character? Situating the self in the field

In his famous play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Italian playwright Pirandello delivers the epitome of a post-modern character-driven ‘non-narrative-narrative’ in which his six characters have been abandoned by their author. ‘Let’s write a fiction that is truer than truth!’ exclaims one of the characters during the play, embracing the challenge to write herself into existence.

Towards the end of the research, I noted in my field diary that the young people in my research were ‘like these characters’: individuals striving to build and maintain a sense of ontological security on a stage that was constantly shifting and without a paternal, authorial voice. The state, the legal guardian of those under the age of 18 (and sometimes those over) often had frequently let them down. But like the character who seeks to create a ‘fiction truer than truth’, in telling stories the young people could often maintain a sense of ontological security and projected sense of self beyond the constraints of their material predicaments.

In this context, I saw myself not as an author, but as another character observing from the side of the stage and occasionally having a small part. This posed several challenges as, from my position of privilege and power, I was aware of my potential to help to shape the narrative and become an author playing with characters who lacked the material resources to advance plots of their own making. McCleod and Yates's 'distant-formal' research relationship (1997) was an important, but hard line to follow. I was aware that my job was not to write the story to 'fix' them, but to document – in many cases – their lack of narrative stability. I had to find the words to situate them in their rootlessness.

Participant observation requires in this context what Devereux has called 'tenderminded toughmindedness' (cited in Behar 2014: 6). I sought to employ this approach throughout all stages of my thesis by responding to participants on a human level while also recognising and seeking to mitigate power imbalances where possible. This was often far from simple. What do you do when you receive an email at 2am from a young person declaring their intention to jump a train that night to get to England because a safe route cannot be found? I dealt with such ethical quandaries on an ongoing basis throughout the research as planned for in my research ethics application and with the support of both academic colleagues and partner organisations in the field sites.

Boundaries in research

As Behar (2014) has bluntly articulated it, as an ethnographer engaged in participant observation in situations of humanitarian need, the boundary between researcher and

researched is always difficult. 'Our methodology', she explains, 'is defined by the oxymoron "participant observation".' As she poignantly observes:

'it is split at the root: act as a participant, but don't forget to keep your eyes open. Lay down in the mud in Colombia. Put your arms around Omar Sanchez. But when the grant money runs out, or the summer vacation is over, please stand up, dust yourself off, go to your desk, and write down what you saw and heard (2014: 5).'

To paraphrase Behar, often, when I came back late at night after a long stint at one of my field sites, I felt as though I was 'dusting myself off'. At the transit centre in Italy in particular I was required, upon leaving, to perform a series of ablations or rituals which had become institutionalised by the camp volunteers. Firstly, I would scrub my hands with the special soap provided to avoid contracting scabies (for our 'guests', as they were known, frequently presented with the condition, having migrated to the city straight from spending from one to three weeks cramped in damp conditions on a boat where it was easily spread). Secondly, I would change my clothes and put them in a plastic bag to avoid spreading bed bugs from the crowded dorm rooms and donated mattresses that lined the halls. And thirdly, I would drink the obligatory beer with another volunteer and debrief about the more challenging parts of the day. After a particularly grueling interview, once I got home to my rented flat I would light a candle to ceremonially mark my 'stepping out' of the field.

Aware that my position on the edge of the story compromised the impartiality of much of my data, throughout the research, I proactively sought to question my own assumptions. For example, I presented my research in several fora at which I knew I would face a critical audience. A discussion with colleagues in narrative studies, for example, forced me to rethink

my definitions of narrative genres in paper four. Moreover, discussions with colleagues in the Family Research Group in Oxford throughout the research encouraged me to problematise the categorisation of participants as unaccompanied, and also not to over-emphasise their agency to the point of diminishing their very real suffering in material terms.

Creating spaces for voice, listening and silence

While it was sometimes difficult not to become embroiled in the stories of my participants, I recognised that I could assist them through directing them to appropriate services where available. Elsewhere, I could facilitate spaces for them to express themselves through additional outputs, including through the arts.

Like Thomason and Holland (2003), I facilitated the ‘giving of space’ for young people who had participated in the research in various ways to discuss the impact that the research was having on them. I discussed my research findings with participants on an ongoing basis, including through creative means such as poetry, short story writing and music. I also facilitated the involvement of participants in several high-level policy events (e.g. a conference organised by the European Platform for Integration and Migration (EPIM) in Palermo in December 2017). During the latter occasion, several participants from England and Italy met in person to discuss, among other topics, the research and their experience of being involved with it. This provided fertile ground for me to refine my analysis and understanding of the strengths and imitations of my methodology.

During this meeting, I also facilitated and secured funding for participants’ collaboration on a joint music video and song, *Becoming Adult in Another Man’s Land*, which sought to capture

the main messages of the research.¹³ This was one of a series of outputs from the research project which I discuss in more detail in the Conclusion.

Co-creation versus reporting of knowledge

In relation to reflexivity, we must also ask the question which Behar (2014) and Jackson (2013) among other scholars have rightly posed – to what extent is the act of writing ethnography an act of reporting, and to what extent is it an act of creation? Often I was wary of how a simple nod or overenthusiastic comment could serve to shape the narrative being told and determine the account of the life project being given, for example. My natural disposition is one that is friendly and open. As such, I also found myself sharing facets of my own life project which may have influenced the data, for example, inadvertently steering the conversation towards my passion for learning foreign languages or, as a PhD student, studying.

Frequently, participants asked me about my home country, England, and I had to think carefully about the information I gave them, aware that it may shape their future plans. In all respects I sought to be honest with participants. When the border with Calais became more militarised in 2016 for example, I shared, when asked, this knowledge with participants. As I have already mentioned, because of the increasing criminalisation of humanitarian assistance to irregular migrants during the course of my field research, at times I was unsure (alongside other volunteers) whether even simple interventions, such as providing food and water and advice on how to buy an onwards travel ticket from Italy to other parts of Europe placed me

¹³ The song and video are available at the following link: <https://becomingadult.net/2017/12/20/becoming-adult-the-definitive-song/>

on the wrong side of the law. I have written about these dilemmas elsewhere (Allsopp 2017b; Carrera et al. 2018b).

Shame, responsibility and social justice: a note on being European

Finally, questions of shame, responsibility and social justice are ones that I have reflected upon a lot in planning and conducting this research and in writing this thesis, recognising my position as a European at a time when European politicians were barring pathways for many of the young people with whom I was working. This was also a time in which my own country of origin, Britain, voted to leave the EU through a campaign in no small part won by scaremongering about would-be migrants and refugees. All these events shaped this research, although I have tried to document my biases and mitigate them wherever I can.

I have felt a huge sense of responsibility and guilt throughout this time, which has channeled itself into other endeavours independent of this thesis. Bourdieu famously said that Sociology is a martial art. ‘Researching the lives of migrants and refugees in the UK’, I wrote in one of my personal field diaries in this context, ‘feels like we are fighting a war with no arms.’ I continued:

‘Yes, often our research falls on doggedly deaf ears. We try to give the little dignity we can to our fellow human beings in documenting their struggles and successes in the hope that evidence may change the state of things or even the way that history remembers this moment of our making.’

Partly in response to the deaths of more than one research participant, partly because of the huge scale of humanitarian need that I witnessed throughout my fieldwork, and partly in recognition that I had a rare opportunity to help to shape European policy in this area, I took some time off from my thesis during the data analysis phase to work on another project at Europe's borders.

The humanitarian impulse to document what was unfolding at that moment was, I felt, imperative. This time allowed me to better contextualise and process my field material. It has also, I hope, enriched it with further insight on the border regime of the EU and certain member states which included the UK and Italy. This border regime and in particular its anti-smuggling apparatus seeks among other goals to govern young migrants' mobility to and within Europe through an increasingly nontransparent and legally dubious range of tactics. These included, at the time of writing, push backs of migrant boats from European waters to Libya and the criminalisation of humanitarian assistance on land and at sea (Carrera et al. 2018a; 2018b).

As I finish writing this thesis, I have recently travelled to the Hungarian-Serbian border with another research project focused on anti-smuggling and humanitarian assistance, where I met a group of unaccompanied young Afghans yet to reach Europe to 'start the dream'. I told them about my PhD work and they were excited – yes, they too had a dream. Every night, they told me, they tried to cross the border. I recognised the spark in their eyes. They were exhausted, hungry, but also excited – their story was still one of fantasy (see paper four). As I left, a volunteer showed me a photo on her phone of a series of dog bites inflicted on one of their torsos by police dogs that had not been visible to me.

I was reminded not for the first time that as an ethical ethnographer who takes power and privilege seriously, ‘the field’ often has no borders. The tape has been stopped, but the story is always still unfolding *somewhere*; there is always a counter-point.

As I crossed back into the EU from Serbia, casually flipping my passport at the border guards through the car window, I reflected, ‘Why have they come...Why have they come? And *what* have they to come? *What* have they to come?’

And then I recalled the power of the life project and of the dream, and of the hundreds of stories told and borrowed and distilled into the thesis that follows, and I remembered: ‘they went’ of course – and the words of Rakim, the Eritrean elder, rang out – ‘and some will even make it! They went, even before they arrived...’

The four academic papers stemming from this research are now presented in turn, followed by a detailed conclusion.

Paper One: Best Interests, Durable Solutions and Belonging: Future Prospects for Unaccompanied Migrant Minors Coming of Age in Europe

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Abstract

This paper sheds light on the ambiguous position of children who migrate without a parent or guardian as they become adults in the European Union (EU). Through a critical analysis of three prevailing frames ('best interests', 'durable solutions' and 'belonging'), which largely inform policy and practice related to this group, it explores the tension between policy assumptions and what we know of the lived experiences and aspirations of these young people. It ultimately reveals a policy framework shaped by a state-centric view of migration, a static conception of belonging and a bias towards a political preference for return. Such a stance underestimates young people's agency and willingness to embrace risk in their efforts to secure a viable future. The net result is policy which fails to offer a 'durable solution' or act in the 'best interests' of individual migrant young people or of society as a whole.

Introduction

Over the last decade, academics have accorded substantial attention to documenting, critiquing and responding to the migration triggers, lived experiences and protection needs of so-called ‘unaccompanied’ or ‘separated’ child migrants in Europe (Thomas et al. 2004; Chase et al. 2008; Kanics et al. 2010; Lemberg-Pedersen and Chatty 2015); and to comparing the policy responses towards children and youth across EU member states, Nordic countries and members of the Council of Europe (Kanics et al. 2010; EU Fundamental Rights Agency 2011; European Migration Network 2010). This focus on child migrants has been accompanied by a notable lack of consideration given to the experiences and outcomes for these young people once they turn 18. With a primary focus on the UK and Italy, this article juxtaposes the lived experiences of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees ‘becoming adult’ in Europe, with the policy and legislative norms that seek to govern them. Particular attention is paid to the concepts of ‘best interests’ and ‘durable solutions’ and to the assumptions about agency and belonging that underlie them.

Unaccompanied migrant minors becoming adult in Europe

As they make the transition to ‘adulthood’, institutionally defined as aged 18, unaccompanied young migrants frequently see the evaporation of the rights previously accorded to them as children (Kanics et al. 2010; Hammarberg 2010). This happens irrespective of whether they remain in Europe with or without one of a number of possible legal statuses, embark on secondary migration (within or beyond Europe), return to countries of origin, or re-migrate to Europe following deportation – all known possibilities for this group.

Uncertainty surrounding their futures has social and economic consequences for migrant young people and can have a substantial impact on their subjective wellbeing. Research with young people seeking asylum alone in the UK suggests that a sense of wellbeing is derived not just from feeling in control of current and past aspects of their lives, but from having a firm feeling of belonging and a projected sense of self within a future trajectory (Chase 2013a, 2013b). Other scholarship has similarly highlighted how migrant young people actively strive to secure futures over which they have autonomy and control (Chatty 2007; 2010). In their introduction to this special issue, Menjívar and Perreira give equal consideration to the periods *before*, *during* and *after* migration in recognition of the importance of considering the experiences of unaccompanied minors as they play out over time rather than from a fixed temporal standpoint.

The uncertainty that often characterizes the experiences of unaccompanied minors as they look towards the future not only affects individual outcomes but may also have a collective impact. Scholars have established an important connection in public policy discourse between the perceived future prospects for ‘youth’ and normative ideas about the potential success of nations (Boyden 1997; Griffin 2001); and between the future of nation-states and the risks and opportunities associated with migration flows (e.g. Miller 2005; Castles et al. 2005). The high number of unaccompanied young men fleeing to Europe in the context of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015-2016, for example, has prompted fears of a demographic imbalance (Hudson 2016) and conjured associations of virility and violence which are seen as threats, not only to the harmony of individual member states, but to the EU as a whole (Allsopp 2017b).

Combining a critical analysis of relevant European policy frameworks and insights from interviews conducted with young people and service providers in the UK and Italy, this article brings together these different threads of policy (youth transitions, migration and wellbeing) to reveal the dissonance between how the concept of ‘futures’ has been mobilized in contemporary European policies governing the outcomes of young people subject to immigration control as they turn 18, and young people’s own intentions for their futures. It interrogates three normative assumptions prominent within European policy responses to the migration of unaccompanied children and young people. Firstly, that unaccompanied young migrants and institutional actors share a common idea of ‘best interests’; secondly, that returning young people refused asylum to countries of origin or previous residence is a ‘durable solution’; and thirdly, that these young people ‘belong’ in their countries of origin. The term ‘unaccompanied migrant young people’ is used to transcend the ‘under 18’ (child) / ‘over 18’ (adult) binary, as laid out in legal instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). It recognizes that whilst the policy landscape significantly shifts for young people across Europe as they turn 18, in reality the transition to ‘adulthood’ is shaped by many other intersecting social, economic and cultural factors. The UK and Italy were chosen as case studies because, while both are party to EU policy and legislation pertaining to unaccompanied young migrants and refugees, they apply these policies during the transition to adulthood at 18 in very different ways. While these policy divergences provide important context and impact upon the decision-making of the young migrants in question, they are not the focus of this particular article.¹⁴

¹⁴ Some important policy differences should be stated. Italy, for example, has a separate legal route for unaccompanied minors not seeking asylum, whilst in the UK all unaccompanied migrant minors go through the asylum system.

Methodology

The article draws on emerging findings from the ESRC-funded research project ‘Becoming Adult’¹⁵ which explores the life trajectories and wellbeing outcomes of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees as they experience multiple and intersecting transitions to adulthood. Analysis of policy documents and legislation concerning unaccompanied minors and refugees at the EU level¹⁶ is combined with emerging findings from field research with more than one hundred unaccompanied migrant young people (aged 16-25) interviewed between 2015 and 2016 in the UK (n.:60+) and Italy (n.:40). The research received ethical clearance from the University of Oxford and University College London and ethical considerations were addressed on an ongoing basis over the course of the research. Interview participants were identified through non-governmental organisations and snow-ball sampling via young people’s social networks. A team of young people with direct experience of unaccompanied migration were recruited and worked as core members of the research team throughout the project. Participants included individuals from a range of countries of origin and with different pathways through and experiences of the immigration and reception systems.

The ‘Harmonisation’ of European Policy

Consistent flows of unaccompanied young migrants to Europe in recent years have prompted efforts to harmonize policy responses towards them. While numbers fluctuate between

¹⁵ Further information about the project and methodology is available at: www.becomingadult.net.

¹⁶ For a more detailed analysis of European policy documents and legislation, see Chase and Allsopp 2014.

countries, until 2014 the EU received an average of between 11,000 and 12,000 applications from unaccompanied minors a year (Eurostat 2016a). By 2014, however, this number had almost doubled and, by 2015, had risen significantly further to over 96,000 (Eurostat 2016b). Asylum claims aside, there is evidence to suggest that an unknown number of unaccompanied migrant young people do not claim asylum, may avoid detection by institutions altogether and are largely absent from any policy agenda (Bloch et al. 2011; 2014; European Commission 2012; Sigona and Hughes 2012). Most young people who do apply for asylum in Europe are denied refugee status or humanitarian protection but are afforded temporary welfare support and care provisions under ‘discretionary’ leave to remain arrangements while they are ‘vulnerable’ children in need of international protection. This makes the transition to ‘adulthood’ at 18 years a time of acute change and uncertainty.

Since the late 1990s, like adult migrants, the lives of unaccompanied young people in Europe are largely governed by an increasingly unified Common European Asylum System which seeks to harmonize reception, integration and return procedures for migrants while synergizing immigration policies and strengthening economic and political collaboration between EU Member States (Lindstrøm 2005; Ruffer 2005; Schuster 2005). Many such policies have been criticized for normalizing discriminatory and exclusionary practices (Düvell 2009; Watters, 2007; Uçarar 2001), including specifically in relation to children and young people (e.g. Enenajor 2008).

A range of non-binding treaties and guidelines have sought to harmonize and regulate procedures and protocols at the international level for unaccompanied migrant children (see, for example, the 1997 UNHCR Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum and the 2005 UN Committee on the Rights of the

Child General Comment no. 6 on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin). The treatment of unaccompanied minors is also governed by a range of binding international legal instruments, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989) and the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva Convention 1951).

Couched within the discourse of the ‘best interests of the child’ and the need to find ‘durable solutions’, several Europe-wide tools and best practices for work with young people have been formulated including the Council of the European Union Conclusions on Unaccompanied Minors, adopted in June 2010; and a 2010-2014 EU Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors. A prime example of policy harmonization for unaccompanied minors is the Life Project planning framework (Drammeh 2010). This framework, adopted by the 47 countries in the Council of Europe (Recommendation (2007)9), is explicitly referenced within the 2010 Council of the European Union Conclusions on Unaccompanied Minors and it is similarly endorsed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2011).

The Life Project planning framework speaks to the prevalence of temporary legal statuses accorded to unaccompanied migrant young people, the common associated experience of ‘waiting’ and the inherent difficulties of planning for the future in a context of such uncertainty. The stated aim of the framework is to ‘contribute to finding lasting solutions for and with unaccompanied migrant minors that will help them to build life projects guaranteeing them a better future’ (Council of Europe 2007: 7). Prevalent in the Life Project planning framework are the concepts of ‘bests interests’ and ‘durable solutions’ which have come to dominate the discourse surrounding unaccompanied young migrants and refugees at the European level and which heavily influence practice at the national and local level.

Below, each of the concepts is discussed alongside evidence from our qualitative research. We also interrogate a third, related norm prevalent in the European policy framework: belonging.

‘Best Interests’

Article 24 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights stresses ‘[in] all actions relating to children, whether taken by public authorities or private institutions, the child's best interests shall be a primary consideration.’ This article is given legally binding force in The Treaty of Lisbon. The concept of ‘best interests’ emerged in the last three decades as part of a broader recognition of the rights of the child (Hart 1991) and is enshrined in Article 3 of the CRC 1989. Article 3.2 links ‘best interests’ to the protection and care necessary for a child’s wellbeing.

The CRC General Comment No. 6 (2005) is explicit that the state is responsible for protecting the rights and determining the ‘best interests’ of unaccompanied minors up to the age of 18. State responsibility post-18 depends on national legislation¹⁷, although the 2005 CRC Comment does outline the need for states to find ‘durable solutions’ for unaccompanied minors once they come of age; and, more recently, research by the UNHCR and Council of Europe (2014) recommends that states introduce a ‘transition category’ for migrant young people turning 18 in order to inform appropriate policy responses.

¹⁷ They may, for example, in the UK, meet criteria to become a ‘care leaver’, through which certain rights can be extended under certain conditions until the age of 25 (see Allsopp et al. 2014).

Yet in practice, there is no clear definition of ‘best interests’ (Engebrigtsen 2003) and much ambiguity exists as to its usefulness in planning ahead for what happens when young people come of age. Some have argued that while in theory the best interests principle should extend beyond childhood up until the age of 25 or, in the context of a recent UK case (KA (Afghanistan) & Ors v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2012] EWCA Civ 1014), that there can be no ‘bright line rule’ around age when dealing with age-related persecution, in effect the ‘best interests’ principle appears largely redundant for young people once they turn 18 (Freeman 2005; Dixon and Wade 2007).

Two core assumptions appear to underpin normative ideas about ‘best interests’ with respect to unaccompanied migrant young people. The first is that European host states share a common understanding of ‘best interests’ with the young people for whom they are responsible; the second is that young people will comply with the institutionally-defined version of their ‘best interests’. Our research suggests a frequent tension between the young person’s conception of their best interests and the requirements of the state, leading them to disengage with authorities and look to alternative resources and means to pursue their goals. Young people under 18 refused asylum in our UK sample, in particular, were often acutely aware that the same statutory actors looking out for them now may abandon them when they turn 18.¹⁸ One social worker commented that in her experience minors in this position pursue one of two routes: disengagement; or ‘the ostrich’ (not thinking about the future). We know that around 2,000 former unaccompanied minors leave the care system in the UK each year (Pinter 2012), although we have little idea about what happens to them or what subsequent contact they have (if any) with immigration control structures (Gladwell and Elywn 2012).

¹⁸ In practice, they may not experience as stark a cut-off as feared at the age of 18, due to ongoing appeals processes, during which they can still access certain rights.

Our current work confirms the lack of institutional knowledge of the outcomes of former unaccompanied minors who have spent time in the care of local authorities across England (Humphris and Sigona 2016b).

Whose ‘best interests’?

Being ‘counted’ as an unaccompanied asylum seeking minor accords certain rights and entitlements in both the UK and Italy while simultaneously generating other forms of vulnerability (Enenajor 2008) and disempowerment (Bhabha 2003). Furthermore, the ‘costs’ of receiving support may accrue once the young person turns 18 and entitlements and services become contingent on moving to another location, remaining compliant with immigration procedures, having to sign up to voluntary return or rendering themselves liable for detention and deportation. For those with no right to remain in Europe, ‘best interests’ dissolve and are trumped starkly by the imperatives of immigration control at the age of 18.

While young migrants rarely use the language of ‘best interests’, they frequently allude to their right to have a voice in decisions that affect them (as outlined in Article 12 of the CRC 1989). Some research participants described how their care providers had helped them to realise their goals and aspirations and others spoke of how the host country offered them opportunities for ‘big dreams’ (Chase 2013a, 2013b; Allsopp et al. 2015) that they had been unable to conceive of in their countries of origin. Others, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the level and scope of the care they received, sometimes indicating that their hopes and aspirations ran contrary to what they were allowed to do according to institutional guidelines and rules, thus creating tension between themselves and their social workers.

In keeping with Article 12 of the CRC (1989), it is anticipated that the ‘expectations, wishes and perceptions’ of unaccompanied minors will be taken into account in determining their pathways in the host country. However, the Life Project framework offers no counsel regarding the ethical and moral dilemmas arising in the not-uncommon situation in which the perceived ‘best interests’ of the young person and the institutional framework imposed by the state come into conflict (Bhabha 2003; Engebrigtsen 2003; Crawley 2006; Chase 2013a; Wade 2011). The notion that Life Projects are negotiated ignores the structural constraints imposed by the legal and administrative systems which govern both the child rights framework and the migration control and security priorities of member states.

By way of example, one of several reasons for absconding from child reception centres cited by young people in our Italy research was the fact that they were prevented from working. Khalid from Egypt, 16, explains how he moved between centres trying to find one that would accommodate his request to work, only to be met with the same response:

‘First I thought I’d come to Italy and work. I knew I’d enter a shelter [casa familia] but I thought I’d come and work on the second day. I didn’t think I’d have to go to school and language lessons. I was surprised! I didn’t want to do those things but it went like that. I went to the first centre and they said “go to school, go to school”; then the next one: “go to school, go to school, school,” [laughs]. Then I came here and they said “study, study, go to school” [laughs]. In Egypt I did just five years of school!’

Some young people described the immense pressure on them to work either to pay off the debts of their journey (cited by participants to average between 3,000-4,000 Euros from

North Africa to Italy alone), or to send remittances to families who live in poverty back in their country of origin or who seek funds to flee themselves. Others, having worked since a very young age and accrued skills, felt frustrated when these went unrecognised.

Importantly, the negotiation of ‘best interests’ is often, from young people’s perspectives, not simply between the individual and the state, but also involves other actors, such as their family or social networks. This idea of ‘collective interests’ may sit in tension with the individualistic conception of the child’s ‘best interests’ advanced by EU policy norms. Some participants spoke of feeling torn between this collective obligation to their family and the attraction of more individualistic opportunities being offered to them in the host country. These included pathways such as going to University, but also other life enhancing opportunities such as pursuing romantic relationships or new hobbies.

Compliance with institutional processes

While children ‘leant in’ to the support structures when they saw them as conducive to their ‘best interests’, they also ‘leant out’ when systems and structures limited their options. There is a growing awareness of young people’s abilities to evade systems of control (Chase 2010; Schuster and Majidi 2013; Bloch et al. 2012) and to negotiate and make measured decisions about the risks facing them in the migratory processes and what they perceive as their own ‘best interests’ (Williams and Baláž 2012). It is well documented, for example, that many migratory young people evade detection as they pass through certain countries in order to make it easier to claim asylum or reunite with family members when they arrive in the destination state (Frontex 2010). They also take calculated risks (Williams and Baláž 2012) in moving from one country to the next: hiding in or under lorries, crossing oceans in unstable boats and subjecting themselves to the control of agents who transport them.

Evidence suggests that young people engaged in formal state-led futures planning processes may simultaneously pursue alternative life projects which they may or may not share with social workers who seek to guide them (Chase 2010; 2013a). A burgeoning field of research is exploring how a range of social networks may shape these plans (Wells 2011).

Data available at the national level confirm that as young people turn 18 in the UK, those without a legal right to remain may shield themselves from the possibility of deportation by purposefully disengaging from bureaucratic processes (Kohli and Mitchell 2007), this phenomenon of ‘disappearing’ having been also observed in other European states with active detention and deportation regimes, such as Norway and Sweden (Refugee Children’s Consortium 2013; UNHCR/Council of Europe 2014; Olin 2012). Esatullah from Afghanistan explained the dilemma he faced on becoming appeal rights exhausted in the UK and how he came to make the decision to disengage from institutional processes:

‘I wanted to go and sign and submit my fresh application but I told my solicitor, ‘if I get detained are you responsible? – can you do anything?’ And she said, ‘no ... I cannot guarantee anything’ And so I said, ‘I am not going to sign’ (the Home Office), Because if you go ... there is very little chance to get detained in the first, second or third week to go for signing. But after that you will most likely be detained you know? I wasn’t like strong enough to make that decision to say ‘OK I am going to go for signing’ – because I have seen so many of my friends that have been deported ... so I just decided, ‘I will stay and see whatever happens later on’, but thinking that by yourself you are going to go into danger ... obviously you are not going to do it. So that’s it... I just quit.’

Importantly, a couple of years after living illegally in the UK with all its inherent difficulties, Esatullah made the subsequent decision to make a fresh claim for asylum. This decision was based on his perceived rationale that the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan would make it less likely for him to be forcibly returned and more likely that his fresh claim for asylum – and a possible future – in the UK would be successful.

5,000 of the estimated 10,000 unaccompanied minors who Europol claim to have disappeared across the EU in 2015 disappeared in Italy. Scant research exists regarding the circumstances of their disappearance, however the group is known to include unaccompanied children in transit seeking to reunite with family members elsewhere in Europe and individuals such as Khalid, above, who seek to enter the labour market, where they may be vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. Other young people in our research were disenchanted with their prospects in Italy and planned to head North in pursuit of an alternative.

Bira, from Mali, arrived in Europe in 2013 at the age of 14. At the time he participated in the research, he had permission to stay in Italy for the foreseeable future and was living in a shelter for unaccompanied minors in a city in the north of the country. He explained how he was weighing up his options as he approached his 18th birthday and faced the prospect of unemployment with minimal state support and moving to an overcrowded adult accommodation centre.

‘Since 2013 I’ve not been in work. That’s three years without work. It’s a lot, a lot of time...If I find work I’ll stay, if not I will leave. You need work. And if you can’t work it’s like this: always moving around from one centre to the next. You ask yourself, what will I become living like this? You have to do

something to improve your future ... It's better to go to France or Germany, other countries.'

For some young people in Europe, the formal transition to adulthood at the age of 18 corresponds with what Roberto Gonzales (2011) has called a 'transition into illegality'; when the option of becoming illegal is preferable to facing detention and/or deportation to a country where they fear violence or persecution. Others, like Bira, may choose to forfeit the (more limited) rights and resources they can expect from adult status and abscond to seek better opportunities to 'improve [their] future' elsewhere. While for the state, consideration of the child's 'best interests' stops at the age of 18, most young people make decisions taking into account what they perceive to be their own (and others) 'best interests' in the long run. For most young migrants and asylum seekers, their perceived best interests are linked to the possibility of a viable future. In refugee policy, this equates to the requirement for states to find a 'durable solution'.

'Durable Solutions'

European policy tools governing the treatment of unaccompanied asylum seeking children twin the 'best interests' of the child with the obligation to find a longer term 'durable solution'; either in the host country, in the country of origin or in a third country, such as in the case of family reunion, this facility having been strengthened under the Dublin III regulation.¹⁹

¹⁹ REGULATION (EU) No 604/2013 of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third country national or stateless person.

‘Durable solutions’ have been a central pillar of the international refugee protection framework since its inception. As outlined in the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol, they are a crucial part of the mandate of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR Statute 1950). Durable solutions are applied specifically to unaccompanied minors and separated children in the UNHCR’s 1997 Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum and in a 2005 Comment from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which stresses the primary importance of finding a ‘durable solution’ for each migrant child, and *particularly* as they transition to ‘adulthood’.

In light of international norms, the 2010-2014 European Commission Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors and Council of the European Union Conclusions both stress that return should be considered as one of a number of possible solutions for unaccompanied migrant young people. This is in recognition of the fact that ‘the issue is [...] complex and multidimensional and there are clear boundaries to the Member States’ freedom of action when dealing with unaccompanied minors’ (European Commission 2010: 2).

For those children not granted asylum, however, the European policy framework appears to prioritize immigration control in its bias towards return as the optimal ‘durable solution’ for those who have turned 18.²⁰ The Stockholm Programme, for example, requires the European Commission to ‘examine practical measures to facilitate the return of the high number of unaccompanied minors that do not require international protection’. The emphasis on return

²⁰ Again, differences in national practice should be stressed here. Both France and Italy, for example, give unaccompanied young people turning 18 who have not received asylum the possibility to extend their permits as part of an ‘integration pathway’ into education or into the labour market (see e.g. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2011).

is played out through bilateral return agreements between European host states and ‘countries of origin’, in addition to attempted cross-state initiatives, such as ERPUM (the European Return Platform for Unaccompanied Minors), a now stalled agreement between the UK, Norway, Denmark and Sweden which received significant financial investment (Lemberg-Pedersen and Chatty 2015; European Union 2010). The European Return Fund, which held unaccompanied minors as one of its primary targets allocated 676 million euros for the period 2008-2013 (Official Journal of the European Union 2007). The ultimate failure of ERPUM does not detract from the likelihood of similar return procedures being put in place, particularly in the light of growing concerns surrounding immigration from outside of the EU (Lemberg-Pederson and Chatty 2015; Rasmussen 2016).

In the case of unaccompanied young migrants receiving negative asylum decisions, Life Project plans become part of a tool kit alongside inputs such as pre-departure counselling (European Union Council Conclusions, Article 28, 2010), recommended to prepare young people for their ‘voluntary return’ to countries of origin, the ‘voluntary’ nature of many such returns having been brought into question (Cherti and Szilard 2013).

There are two main challenges to the assumption that returning young migrants in this context is a ‘durable solution’. The first relates to what Gibney (2008: 149) has termed the ‘deportation gap’: ‘the gap between the number of people eligible for removal by the state at any time and the number of people a state actually removes (deports)’. The second relates to the long-term wellbeing outcomes and trajectories of returnees.

The deportation gap

Small studies based on particular European states suggests the un-workability of return as durable policy solution. As noted above, rather than comply with processes of return, it is well documented that many young people tend to abscond once all their rights to appeal for extension of leave to remain are exhausted (Wright 2014; Gladwell and Elwyn 2012); and that incentives such as cash payments, vocational training or tools and equipment to take with them do not make the prospect of return more acceptable (Kromhout 2011). Reflecting on the Dutch experience of attempting to introduce return as a de facto durable solution, Mariska Kromhout concludes,

‘The significant number of separated young people departing for unknown destinations instead of returning to their country of origin is a cause for great concern among Dutch politicians, welfare organizations, and NGOs [...] It is feared that they run the risk of ending up on the streets and being exploited by traffickers (2011: 27).’

While it is currently impossible to determine in any systematic way how many unaccompanied migrant young people have been returned from states across Europe to countries of origin, the most recent data available suggest that in the case of the UK, since 2007 some 2,748 former unaccompanied minors were forcibly returned to countries of origin, the vast majority (in excess of 2,000) of these were returned to Afghanistan (Gladwell et al. 2016). Other small scale enquiries provide an impressionistic picture of the dynamics of attempting to impose such returns. A freedom of information request from the Refugee Support Network to the UK government in 2012 revealed that of the 2,000 former unaccompanied minors who leave care in the UK each year (Pinter 2012), just 100 were forcibly removed from the UK in 2011, while between April 2011 and April 2012, 107 former unaccompanied minors opted for voluntary return (Gladwell and Elwyn 2012: 10).

Evidence gathered by a documentary film maker in Norway, Margreth Olin, revealed that of the twenty former unaccompanied young migrants she followed, only one was forcibly returned at 18 (and then later surreptitiously migrated back to Europe); the other nineteen, despite having participated in return orientation programmes, either ‘disappeared’ as far as the Norwegian authorities were concerned or moved to other countries in Europe (Olin, personal correspondence, 2013). In the current study, many research participants in Italy with irregular status felt relatively protected from the prospect of forced return, in part because of resource constraints limiting Italy’s capacity for detention and deportation. One former unaccompanied minor from Afghanistan who had fled to Italy after becoming appeals rights exhausted in the UK commented that: ‘it’s not like the UK here, with CCTV and stuff. Here when the police get you, they let you go again.’

Despite the fact that many young people evade forcible return, it is difficult to see how the ensuing persistent precariousness of their situations constitutes any ‘durable’ solution for them, or works in the ‘best interests’ of such individuals or of society as a whole.

Long-term outcomes: life after return

For those who are returned, there is scant knowledge about their reintegration experiences, the factors facilitating/inhibiting (re)integration, the extent of re-migration, or their longer-term wellbeing outcomes (Cherti and Szilard 2013). We do not know whether, once returned, they are able to continue their education or secure sustainable livelihoods (Auerbach 2010; Gladwell and Elwyn 2012; Schuster and Majidi 2013; Clayton 2011).

However, recent evidence for those returned to Afghanistan suggests outcomes characterized by high levels of precariousness, danger and insecurity (Gladwell et al. 2016).

Other evidence suggests that ‘return to country of origin’ has led to some young people being sent to countries which they left as part of their migration journey as young children, many years before they arrived in the ‘host’ country and, in some extreme cases, to countries where they have never previously lived, leading to impossibilities for re-integration (Schuster and Majidi 2013). Growing evidence suggests that re-migration is becoming part of young people’s self-designed ‘durable solution’ (Schuster and Majidi 2013; Gladwell and Elwyn 2012; Gladwell et al. 2016), supporting Katy Long’s call to see migration as an alternative to policy responses to refugee movements which have traditionally focused on integration, resettlement and repatriation (Long 2013a). Whilst it is important to note that evidence of re-migration may not necessarily equate to a failure of reintegration (and may, for example, point to possibilities to earn money in order to fund the new migration journey), it does suggest that return may not be ‘durable’ in the sense anticipated by the European sending state. Our own research suggests that after being forcibly returned, young people may go to great lengths to find a place of safety away from Afghanistan, even if this means coping with the inherent risks of migrating beyond the borders of Europe (Chase and Sigona 2016).

Jamal, now aged 23, spent his formative years living as an unaccompanied minor in a city in the Midlands of England. He spoke of his attempt to find safety, knowing that he could no longer return to the UK or Europe after having been forcibly returned to Afghanistan. In his attempt to get to Australia, he ended up in a UNHCR holding camp in Indonesia from where he was later moved to one of a number of immigration detention centres out-sourced and run by the Indonesian government as part of Australia’s regional ‘solution’ to immigration control:

‘I do not know which county will pick me. I don't mind to go any country as long as I feel safe in whatever country pick me, I just want to come out of Indonesia and in this situation...My goal was to go to Australia but after July 2014 whatever ships went to Australia, they returned them back to Indonesia so therefore everyone got stuck in Indonesia. There is no way to go to Australia. My luck! I thought I will go through to Australia quick time, in one year time or so. It is our luck, everything has changed now.’

Bilal was similarly deported to Afghanistan from England at the age of 19. When we spoke to him he was 22 and had recently arrived back in the English city he had lived in between the ages of 16 and 19 and which he described as ‘home’. He explained how he felt upon arriving in Kabul:

‘It was a place from my point of view where I couldn’t live. I mean everything was different, everything. It’s really hard for me to stay in Afghanistan and to make a life...so yeah I couldn’t make it and then we made a move.’

Having spent time working in Dubai he decided to head back to England to recover his old life. But ‘home’, he explains with the remnants of a regional English accent, by this time had changed once more:

‘I feel like that I came back to a place where I wanted but now the feeling and everything...is completely different. It’s like I’ve come to a place that’s become the same as Afghanistan to me because I was away for three years and at the time I had my own work, my own flat, I had income support, I was going to

college, I had lots of friends and now I don't have nothing. I'm staying with my friends, I'm moving around, I'm homeless, I don't have no job, I don't have no support, it's completely, everything is different now...'

The bias towards 'return home' as a future option for unaccompanied migrant young people, and the lack of follow-up or accountability following their return suggest that, like 'best interests', 'durable solutions' are primarily contrived to serve the state rather than the individual. Once returned, whether voluntarily or through force, the Life Project which the young person has embarked upon in the host country ceases to have any relevance and the state which has been responsible for initiating it becomes unaccountable for its outcomes. Several European member states continue to deport individuals to Kabul, in spite of clear warnings from Afghan officials that they are not in a position to uphold the rights of returnees (Lemberg-Pedersen and Chatty 2015; Schuster and Majidi 2013; Gladwell et al. 2016).

This rigid focus on returning young migrants to 'countries of origin' once they become 'adult' is deeply incompatible with their own migratory experiences and life plans. The growing number of 'invisible' young people, as a result, has unintended consequences for states as well as individuals, as evidenced by young people's propensity for re-migration.

Belonging

That the long-term 'best interests' of migrant young people are best served through their return to their countries of origin is predicated on two further normative assumptions regarding membership and belonging which do not necessarily reflect young people's lived

experiences: firstly, that young people ‘belong’ in their countries of origin; and secondly, that belonging is a static characteristic not affected by the experience of migration. Unlike the focus on ‘best interests’ and ‘durable solutions’, ‘belonging’ is not explicitly referenced in European policy frameworks; nonetheless the assumption that young people ‘belong’ back in their ‘country of origin’ is implicit in European policy discourse and practice devised for this group (Chase and Allsopp 2014).

Multiple forms of belonging

The European policy framework appears to assume that migration is a linear, episodic, reversible process which can be tackled from the point of arrival in the host state. This normalized twinning of nationality and belonging – what Lisa Malkki (1995) has called the ‘national order’ of things – has contributed more broadly to the normalizing of returns policies across Europe (De Genova and Peutz 2010). It is also linked to the ‘Westernised’ (Engebrigtsen 2003) premise that family reunification is generally in the ‘best interests’ of the child (ISS and IRC 2007). This perspective fails to consider that the young person’s migration may be part of a ‘family life project’ (see above); or, by contrast, that they may be fleeing domestic violence or family-related persecution (Allsopp 2017a), as was the case for several young men from West Africa and Albania in our sample.

Additionally, the family itself may be part of a diaspora that does not map neatly into traditional geographical mappings of the ‘nation’. The assumption that young people ultimately belong in their countries of origin generates a ‘betwixt and between’ subjecthood; an expectation that there should be a degree of integration into the host state, but ‘not too much’. This is operationalized through a provision in the Life Project planning framework for

‘multiple planning’ (Wade 2011). ‘Multiple planning’ requires young people still being processed by immigration procedures to plan for different scenarios in their futures as well as cultivate multiple senses of belonging, affinities and possible selves as a key part of preparing for their future. In the Life Project Handbook, multiple planning is framed as an advantage which will help young people to become ‘confident and independent world citizens’ (5) and ‘future citizens of the world’ (Drammeh 2010: 65). This terminology spatially and temporally projects a young person’s citizenship status away from the present and from the European host country where he/she currently resides and is tantamount to the host state’s assigning of responsibility for their future outcomes elsewhere in the world; what Nathalie Peutz (2010: 390) has termed, in relation to deportees, a kind of ‘forced transnationality’.

Policies which require young people to ‘multiple-plan’ in relation to their lived experiences of membership may fuel feelings of non-existence, rather than global citizenship. Whilst some young people may feel a strong affinity to their home country and seek one day to return, others may experience multiple, intersectional belongings (Yuval-Davis 2011) and feel that they belong in the host country, or indeed have no sense of belonging at all. Jamal, cited earlier, reflected on the sense of home and attachment he felt in the UK,

‘I love London and I love England, I really love to come back again but I have finger print in UK and the government will find my finger print and will send me back to Afghanistan. I especially missed X (city in UK) a lot, I grew up there and I have so many friends. X (city in UK) is like my home town...I really miss the place. I really wish to come back but I know there is no point to come back because I will be sent back to Afghanistan. That is why I made decision to try different country.’

Despite the principle that the ‘best interests’ of unaccompanied minors should be negotiated, in practice young people’s exercise of control and choice over their future pathways – and future selves – may be extremely limited. This has significant implications for the ‘best interests’ of migrant young people, since an important link has been drawn between young people’s wellbeing and their attachment to future selves which are dependent on membership of certain communities (Dixon and Wade 2007; Chase et al. 2008; Chase 2013a, 2013b). As they become ‘adult’, many young migrants wish to remain in their host state where their private life, including educational aspirations and meaningful relationships, are rooted (Refugee Support Network 2012; Allsopp and Chase 2014).

Social membership

Forcibly returning young people to their country of origin, projected as their legal and rightful place of belonging, also negates what political philosopher Joseph Carens (2009) has termed ‘social membership’ – the de facto belonging which people develop through ‘time’ spent and ‘ties’ developed in the host country (and something that he contends to be especially acute during one’s formative years). The option of remaining in the host country past the age of 18 in order to pursue education or a vocational career (alongside ‘a determination to integrate in the host country’) is discussed in Article 26 of the Council of Europe Life Project Recommendations. Thomas Hammerberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights 2006-2012, explains the need for such a provision thus:

‘[I]n the absence of a mechanism that could allow young adults to remain in the country, they are sometimes forced to interrupt their studies or begin an underground life. This interruption of the residence permit has obvious

consequences as a child may have spent a long time in the country and made efforts to integrate into the host society. All the efforts made by the child and social workers – learning the language, finding appropriate accommodation, assimilating in the host culture and developing a social network – risk being undermined. This should change. Separated children who have successfully integrated should be granted an extension of their residence permit when they come of age (2010: 178).’

However, Hammerberg’s concession yet again reveals a one-dimensional and linear conception of belonging. Such proposed extensions are anticipated to be time-limited, dependent on the young person completing a certain ‘stage’ in their life project with the expectation of a subsequent ‘return’. In practice, examples of such discretionary extensions of leave are few and far between (EU Fundamental Rights Agency 2011; Kanics et al. 2010), but where they do exist, such as in Italy, they can prove beneficial.

Sibal, aged 20 at the time of interview, arrived unaccompanied in Italy at the age of 16. At 18, he was able to extend his permit in order to pursue a tailoring apprenticeship (he worked as a tailor in Bangladesh as a young boy). The company has since employed him, meaning that he can now stay in Italy on a workers visa. ‘I’ve been through so much ... but now I try to look forward’, he remarked. ‘It’s hard for other guys ... there’s a lot of homelessness, but I already had this skill so it’s easier for me’.

Rather than being framed as a right to membership in Carens’s sense, these ad hoc extensions of leave are presented, in European discourse, as illustrations of humanitarian goodwill on the part of the state: they still assume the possibility of future return. As such, they accord young

people no prospective rights claims against the host state by virtue of their having spent their formative years there, and by virtue of having embarked on a life project for which the long-term, as well as short-term goal, may be unequivocally linked to the host state. Hence, the episodic conception of the migration journey appears echoed in the episodic understanding of the Life Project, or rather, of life itself. The default twinning of belonging and national membership prompts Member States to prescribe return as the default policy option for minors refused asylum when they turn 18; meanwhile, young migrants' complex experiences of belonging shape their own subjective pathways, prompting them to alternate between conforming with and resisting 'the system'. That the sentiment of 'belonging' should be an intrinsic element of the negotiated future for any young person is largely ignored in the institutional discourse. Yet any 'solution' which fails to take account of young people's lived experiences of belonging is unlikely, to achieve the goal of being 'durable'.

Conclusion

This article has argued that prevailing European policy instruments which seek to direct the futures of independent young migrants as they 'become adult' at the age of 18 rest on highly normative and flawed constructions of 'best interests', 'durable solutions' and 'belonging'. The 'best interests of the child' framework ceases to have relevance at the age of 18 at which point it is usurped by immigration control with its bias towards enforced return as a supposedly 'durable solution'. Yet, the gap between young people's lived experiences and policy intentions at this important juncture of 'adulthood' means that in practice many former unaccompanied minors struggle to pursue livelihoods post-return, 'disappear' into their host societies or pursue strategies of secondary migration.

Contemporary policies underestimate young people's agency and willingness to embrace risk as part of a migration strategy to fulfill their self-defined future plans; plans which transcend the age of 18 and the 'best interests' framework. Such assumptions, it has been suggested, lead to ineffectual policy outcomes which are not in the 'best interests' of, nor offer a 'durable' solution for, individual migrants, host states or society as a whole. Our on-going research continues to engage critically with these debates and to seek alternative policy frameworks and approaches that promote greater synergy and bridging between policy intentions regarding unaccompanied migrant young people and their lived experiences, aspirations and future goals.

Paper Two: English Iron Rod Welfare versus Italian Colander Welfare: How Unaccompanied Minors Challenge the Myth of a Common Asylum Policy in Europe

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Abstract

The experiences of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees challenge the myth of a common European asylum policy but also show that traditional welfare typologies used to account for differences in welfare across states fail to account for the lived experiences of this group. They do not consider the shifting categorizations of young migrants in institutional terms, nor how the stratification of their social rights therefore plays out over place and time. Moreover, current welfare typologies give inadequate attention to the increasing intersection of the labour market and opportunities for regularization; the relative importance and role of the state in the welfare mix; and the nexus of access to welfare and immigration enforcement. This paper draws on qualitative longitudinal research in England and Italy to argue that rather than experiencing welfare through the lens of Liberal (England) versus Conservative or Mediterranean (Italy) regimes, unaccompanied young migrants and refugees in these countries are better understood as navigating different systems of ‘iron rod welfare’ and ‘colander welfare’. In England, the nexus between welfare and legal status is policed by an iron rod on one side of which exists a plethora of social rights, but on the other the risk of a proactive detention and deportation regime. In Italy, meanwhile, the holes of the colander denote gaps in protection but also possibilities to navigate alternative welfare strategies independently of the

state. The ability to act independently of the state is an important but under-theorised capability for this population, for whom the state is a more ambiguous actor than is traditionally considered in European social policy.

Introduction

Question: Why did Pakir, the undocumented 18-year-old Afghan male forfeit his right to a bed-and-breakfast and weekly allowance in the El Dorado of England and climb back under a lorry through the Channel and relocate to Italy, retracing the steps of a treacherous and illegal journey already once made?

In a previous article in this journal, Sainsbury (2006: 229) highlighted the ‘important interplay between welfare regimes, forms of immigration, and immigration policy regimes in producing distinctive patterns of immigrants’ social rights across countries’. She also noted that ‘in the literature on international migration, social rights have been discussed mostly in terms of *formal entitlements*’ and that ‘the discussion has tended to present social rights at a particular point in time rather than to adopt a *longitudinal perspective*’ (ibid., own italics). Twelve years later, this article is still among the first to consider how immigration policy and welfare regimes interact to shape the opportunity structures and outcomes of groups of migrants over time. It does so with reference to the specific population of unaccompanied migrant minors transitioning to adulthood in Europe. In the EU, an unaccompanied minor is defined by Directive 2011/95/EU as a child (under the age of 18) who arrives on the territory of an EU Member State unaccompanied by an adult responsible or who is left unaccompanied after he or she has entered the territory of the Member States.

In 2014, some 23,000 unaccompanied children applied for asylum in one of the 28 EU member states. This was a significant increase in numbers relative to previous years, which have averaged at 11,000 to 12,000 applications (Eurostat 2013). In 2016, in part in response to the largest humanitarian ‘refugee crisis’ since World War Two, this number rose to 90,000

(Eurostat 2017). The age and gender of this group have remained constant - primarily young males between 15 and 17 years of age; however, the countries of origin of those arriving have varied over place and time. Thousands of other individuals of similar ages have been housed in EU countries as 'unaccompanied minors' particularly in the EU's Southern Mediterranean states such as Italy (European Migration Network 2010; European Commission 2012).

An unknown number of other unaccompanied children arrive in Europe undetected, coming to live in private fostering arrangements or for work (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights 2009, 2011). These children come from economically undeveloped or war-torn countries including Afghanistan, Eritrea, Albania and Syria. Previous research has shown that they come to Europe in search of safety (Kanics et al. 2010; Hopkins and Hill 2008), education (Refugee Support Network 2010; Gladwell and Elwyn 2012), to support their families (Nicolini 2010), and in the hope that there they will be able to build a better future (Brighter Futures 2013; Allsopp et al. 2015).

In their sudden transition from privileged rights holders as 'children' – afforded the same rights as national children by law in EU member states – to 'adults', unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men occupy a unique position in relation to the welfare state, the immigration regime and to what Sainsbury (2012) has referred to as the associated political dynamics of 'inclusion and exclusion'. This research explores how unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men manage the transition in two cities in England and Italy as they 'become adult', as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25. Note that I refer to England in this paper in recognition of certain differences in access to social rights for this group in the devolved nations of the UK. Unaccompanied minors in Scotland unlike England are appointed a legal guardian for example, and have greater access to higher education.

The theoretical contribution of this article is to argue that the welfare regimes of different European countries should be understood as an important factor shaping their distinct immigration and asylum policies and individual migrants' experiences of them. In practice, the disciplines of migration studies and social policy rarely speak to one another, seeing asylum policy and immigration control as one issue, and welfare and labour markets as another. This article finds that they are separate but related issues and that it is only in seeing them as such that we can find the answer to the question posed above. Transitional welfare regime typologies are revealed to fall short in accounting for the experiences of unaccompanied migrant and refugee minors for several reasons including: (i) a sedentary bias – seeing migrants as stuck in one place of arrival without agency to *move on*; (ii) a failure to take account of shifting categorizations and how the stratification of social rights plays out *over time*; and (iii) inadequate attention to a varied and complex intersection of welfare access (including access to the formal and informal labour market) and immigration control systems. This last dynamic, henceforth referred to as the *welfare-immigration control nexus*, is an important component of how welfare is experienced for this group which determines how they interact with statutory and non-statutory welfare – and possibly how they 'go missing' in institutional terms over time, including as they transition to adulthood.

This article frames the structure of and access to the labour market as an important component of migrants' experiences of welfare regimes (Sainsbury 2006); as a determinant of risk (Ruhs 2015; Williams and Baláz 2012); of durability of solutions (Castles 2004; Long 2013a; Betts and Collier 2017) and of subjective wellbeing (Chase 2013a, 2013b). In the social policy literature, labour market structure is commonly seen as a component of 'welfare' typologies. Following the primacy of the labour market structure as both a

determinant of welfare and immigration policy and a priority in the migratory projects of the group under study, however, access to and the structure of the *labour market* is treated as a separate category in the analysis that follows, alongside access to *welfare and social rights* and the proximity between *welfare* and *immigration control*. The analysis, meanwhile considers these three aspects together.

Scholars are yet to accurately analyze migrants' experiences of welfare and their relationship to market and state structures. The article explains how institutional factors and constraints shaped the different options open to unaccompanied minors coming of age in two cities in England and Italy between 2015 and 2016 and how, in this context, they made decisions to 'lean into' and out of state welfare over time and place. Traditional welfare regime typologies have been criticized for failing to consider the experiences of migrant groups (Sainsbury 2006) as well as other groups – such as women – whose relationship to citizenship was more complex (Lewis 1992). The experience of unaccompanied migrant minors and refugees in this study challenge the myth of a common European asylum policy on the one hand, but on the other hand also explode several assumptions regarding traditional welfare regime typologies which have been used by some to account for differences between EU member states.

It is argued here that, rather than experiencing welfare mixes according to the regimes in the most well-known typologies – Liberal (England) versus Conservative or Mediterranean (Italy) – unaccompanied young migrants and refugees in England and Italy are better understood as being affected by the different systems of 'iron rod welfare' and 'colander welfare' respectively. In England, the nexus between welfare and legal status is policed by an 'iron rod', whereas in Italy, it is relatively easy to avoid detention and removal – one can

navigate one's way through one of a series of holes in the colander, rather than finding oneself rigorously placed on either side of an iron rod regime of entitlement and control. In Italy, the 'colander welfare' image also captures a welfare dynamic in which access to social rights is considered to be less comprehensive and, in the welfare mix, the state plays less of a role in financing, providing and regulating welfare services. The 'holes' in the colander denote gaps in protection - but also possibilities to navigate alternative welfare strategies independently of the state. The ability to act independently of the state is an important but under-theorised capability for this population, for whom the state is an ambiguous actor. Because of a lack of attention to migrants' and asylum seekers' experiences in social policy, this dimension is under-theorised in traditional typologies of welfare regimes. This article seeks to fill this gap. Three core aspects of these experiential models are noted and discussed, with empirical examples, in what follows:

- (i) **The labour market** - the structure of the formal and informal labour market and opportunities for regularisation
- (ii) **Welfare and social rights** - The role and generosity of the state in the welfare mix and its relative importance in relation to informal welfare
- (iii) **The welfare/immigration control nexus** - the proximity between welfare service providers and immigration control agents and the associated risk for the migrant that accessing welfare will lead to immigration enforcement

Wolff and De Shalit's (2007) theory of disadvantage – a revised version of the 'functionings' and 'capabilities' put forward by Sen (2005) and Nussbaum (2011) amongst others – is employed in this article as a theoretical tool to explore how young people understand and

negotiate these differences over place and time, as further detailed in the methodology section.

This paper evidences the importance of looking beyond state-level governance structures and formal entitlements and towards the lived experiences of individuals, including at the city level. As Dwyer (2005: 4) argues, citing Daly's (2003) call to liberate the discipline of social policy from a reified, top-down view of governance and locate the state and its policies in a wider social reality: 'the broad brush theoretical approach of many governance theorists may marginalize the detailed analysis of welfare policies and their effects on different social groups that are an essential part of social policy inquiry'. Moreover, a failure to explore how migrants and refugees navigate social policies on the ground is one of the key reasons for – to cite the seminal article on the topic by Castles (2004) - 'why immigration policies *fail*' (own italics). 'State policies do matter and influence migratory patterns in important ways', Castles (2004: 205-206) concedes, 'but often not in the ways policy-makers say that they intend'. Rather, across labour market and welfare as well as asylum and immigration governance, at the level of the individual 'policies become *opportunity structures* to be compared and negotiated' (Castles 2004: 209, own italics). Castles was one of the first scholars (see later e.g. Ruhs 2015) to suggest that deregulated labour markets might provide better opportunities for certain migrants.

The issue of unaccompanied minors is a timely case study. This group has received substantial policy attention in recent years at the national and European Union (EU) levels (Allsopp and Chase 2017) after 10,000 unaccompanied minors were registered as 'disappeared' in the EU in institutional terms in 2016 alone, of which half were apparently 'lost' in Italy (Europol 2017). Many more without regular status are known to disappear after

their 18th birthday when they lose the rights accorded to them as children (Allsopp et al. 2015). This research suggests that for many unaccompanied young migrants and refugees, ‘being lost in Europe’ in institutional terms does not simply equate to being kidnapped by traffickers as the policy agenda would often have us believe. Rather, for some it equates to them seeking alternative opportunities outside the ‘gaze’ of their host state which may exist, as I argue is the case here between England and Italy, in another Member State with another ‘type’ of regime. Because of poorly coordinated data collection and the miscounting (and multiple counting) of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees at the EU level (Allsopp and Chase 2017), statistics tell us very little in this domain. Qualitative work, such as this, is thus the start of unpicking this puzzle. This article explores how policies are negotiated by this specifically vulnerable and under-researched group of migrants in transit or *in situ* both before and after they turn 18.

Background

Unaccompanied children in Europe

Unaccompanied children (or ‘minors’ as they are commonly known) are individuals up to the age of 18 who migrate without a legal guardian for a combination of reasons including the pursuit of sanctuary, education, work and family reunification. They constitute a ‘hard to reach group’ in research terms – so, while a wealth of evidence exists on their pre-18 experiences, this is mostly focused on formal entitlements and little is known about their lives after 18. Their transition to institutional adulthood is fraught since it often encompasses the transition not only out of child-related social welfare but also into mainstream welfare services. For children who claim asylum and are recognised as refugees according to the

1951 Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol, institutional adulthood at 18 should usher in equal social rights to those of citizens.

In the UK, all unaccompanied minors progress through the asylum system – whether they claim to be at risk of persecution or not – into a welfare-enforcement nexus known as the ‘hostile environment’ (Allsopp 2017b). This is characterized by a range of ‘bordering practices’ which serve to stratify and exclude certain migrant groups, including in some cases unaccompanied minors (Guentner et al. 2016; Morris 2002). A range of public and private actors, including education institutions, landlords, hospitals and banks, are now required in UK law to check the immigration status of individuals seeking to access services and, in certain cases, to report them to the Home Office. These controls are executed by everyday workers, who often struggle to understand the complex entitlement rules; this leads to wider discriminatory impacts, including for individuals with legal rights to reside in the UK (Allsopp 2016; Carrera et al. 2018a, 2018b). In Italy, minors may be categorized as asylum seeking or non-asylum seeking minors with the opportunity to regularize their status through the asylum system and/or the labour market under certain conditions.

As noted above, Italy and England have different traditions of immigration and welfare ideologies. Traditionally a country of emigration, Italy has more recently become ‘a *second-best destination* for many migrants’ to Europe (Del Boca and Venturini 2014: 5). England meanwhile has been a country of immigration (since about the 1950s, its colonial history linking it to established migrant populations). While the UK model of migrant incorporation focuses on social inclusion (Jones 2013) with many migrants going on to become citizens, Italy’s predominant method of inclusion is via the labour market (Scarpa 2016; Delvino and Spencer 2014; Zincone 2009). While it is easier for long-term migrants to regularize their status

in an ‘ad hoc’ way in Italy compared to England (Korac 2009:12), first generation migrants rarely become Italian citizens (Ambrosini 2011; Villano and Bertocchi 2014).

England operates a strict separation between asylum and other types of migration, while in Italy unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men experience a more fluid interaction between asylum, migration and labour market policy. Again, the relatively weak presence of the state and Italy’s large informal economy (estimated to represent 30-40% of GDP, with large variation by sector and region) favours the presence of an unregulated migrant force (Del Boca and Venturini 2014: 7). Italy’s informal economy is well-established compared to that in England, although England’s unregulated labour market is also important.

The different make-up of the unaccompanied minor populations in England and Italy reflects in part the different opportunities available. These are partially shaped by Italy’s labour market structure and related post-18 regularization pathway for non-asylum seeking minors. Pre-existing social networks coupled with the availability of care and support structures are key factors in whether former unaccompanied minors in Italy can secure shelter and employment as they ‘become adult’. Italy has an existing population of labour migrants from Egypt, Bangladesh and Albania, which are also among the main origin countries for unaccompanied minors there. Some draw on these networks and on skills obtained through previous work in their country of origin to find suitable jobs, e.g. as farmers, tailors or mechanics. Other research participants in Italy found mentors among the volunteer community in Rome with whom they came into contact because of the prominent role of NGOs and religious groups in Italy’s clientelist Mediterranean welfare mix (Ferrara 2010). The success of civil society in integrating young people may be one of the reasons why they

were targeted in recent control measures implemented in Italy to dissuade immigration (Allsopp 2017b).

Though largely ignored in a scholarship understandably concerned with child and refugee-based protection frameworks, the labour market is an important factor in shaping the decision-making landscape for this group. Importantly, the fact of having a job can also, in *some* EU Member States (primarily Italy and France), provide a way to regularize one's status outside of the asylum system. If they receive a positive appraisal from care workers and have spent a certain period of time in the country, unaccompanied children who do not claim asylum in Italy can extend their legal residence for the purposes of education, work or training until the age of 19. If they can obtain a work contract in this time, they can then extend their legal residence further on a rolling basis. While many scholars defend, and police the boundary between forced migration on the one hand and economic migration on the other, this article takes a pragmatic approach that sees unaccompanied minors as straddling these two categories. It does so for four reasons:

Firstly, the decision to migrate, as well established in literature, is often a combination of *push and pull factors* (Castles et al. 2013). Secondly, because of their *privileged position as children*, unaccompanied minors can stay in the country of migration until the age of 18 even if they do not claim asylum, which thereby provides specific, albeit short-term, opportunities for those not fleeing persecution in addition to those who are. This is especially the case in Italy, where returning children to their countries of origin against their will is against the Constitution. Member States including the UK have tried and failed to date to devise a system for returning minors. See e.g. Lemberg-Pedersen and Chatty (2015) on the failed project of ERPUM (European Return Project for Unaccompanied Minors). Thirdly, the link

between policies vis-à-vis those aimed at economic migrants and those aimed at refugees has been blurred from the outset of the European harmonization project. The reality of *mixed migration flows* has instead led in practice to overarching policy in some areas, as seen in the anti-smuggling agenda (Castles 2011, Carrera et al. 2017a, 2017b).

Fourthly, there is *fluidity and variation of ‘bureaucratic labelling’* (Zetter 1991, 2007) of migrants and their categorization across time and jurisdictions. Despite attempts at the EU level to harmonize recognition rates (e.g. through the distribution of ‘safe third country lists’), Italy has a higher recognition rate than England for asylum seekers especially from certain countries such as Afghanistan. Italy is also more likely to grant humanitarian leave. In England, meanwhile, most unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors are granted time-limited discretionary leave to remain which expires at the age of 17 and a half and which is rarely extended (see Allsopp et al. 2015). In Italy, then, it is generally perceived to be ‘easier’ to obtain legal status. These variables demonstrate that, as Trauner remarks, ‘while the EU has worked towards harmonizing asylum standards and procedures, it has not managed yet to establish a comparable and uniform system. In other words, it does matter where an asylum seeker submits the application’ (2011: 313).

Theoretical Framework: Capabilities as ‘Genuine Opportunities for Secure Functionings’

Wolff and De Shalit (2007: 51) explain that most social policy scholars assume an anti-libertarian, pro-interventionist stance. This bias does not aid an understanding of the experiences, ‘genuine choices’ and decision-making of this group of migrants for whom accessing generous state support can often expose them to greater immigration enforcement.

Indeed, the fact that the law itself is already in play for these young people in securing viable futures (most unaccompanied minors have travelled ‘illegally’ to Europe) is one reason why it is important to break this institutionalist bias in studies of welfare, labour market and immigration policy. As Williams and Baláž (2012) have argued, a state-centric framework struggles to explain risk such as in the example given at the start of this article. Through Wolff and De Shalit’s framework of ‘genuine opportunities for secure functionings’, this paper seeks to go some way to explaining such patterns of behaviour.

According to the capability approach advanced by Sen – also developed by Nussbaum (2011) and Robeyns (2017) among others –, an individual’s flourishing and potential are determined principally by what they are able *to be* and *do*. Temporally, this account of human welfare looks to the present and future, considering as it does not just an individual’s situation but their *opportunities* as fundamental to their wellbeing. This theory is an apt fit for this group whose wellbeing has been linked in the literature to having a sense of future ontological security and the ability to choose and realize a life or project of one’s own making (Chase 2013a, 2013b). Because of their time-limited legal statuses and common experiences of waiting for the outcomes of asylum and regularization claims, the lack of *security of capabilities* for this group of migrants is in itself a problem (Chase, forthcoming). Young people in this position must weigh up different opportunities as part of a dynamic I and my co-authors have referred to elsewhere as ‘tactics of time and status’ (Allsopp et al. 2015). In their revision of the capabilities framework, Wolff and De-Shalit (2007) are sensitive to how this insecurity of capabilities in the present and ambivalent relationship with the state affects the decision making of disadvantaged groups (within which they include asylum seekers). Adapting the capability theory to one of ‘genuine opportunities for secure functioning’, they explore how disadvantaged individuals may forfeit certain rights (or ‘functionings’) in the

now, in the hope of securing possibilities for obtaining more rights ('capabilities') in the future. They explain: 'The idea is that if exercising an opportunity will involve undue cost or risk to other functionings, it is not a genuine opportunity' (81). A 'corrosive disadvantages', in turn, is one that impedes other functionings and capabilities. By this logic, accessing a bed-and-breakfast and weekly allowance may not be a 'genuine opportunity' if it comes with the risk of being detained and/or deported, as is the case for individuals refused asylum who must 'sign on' at police stations weekly or monthly to receive ongoing welfare support in the UK. The fact of being undocumented in itself can be understood among this group, as we will see as a 'corrosive disadvantage'. Importantly, Wolff and De-Shalit note nevertheless that 'anxiety may or may not be proportionate to "the objective dimensions" of the risk'... '[f]ear and anxiety may in many cases become the most important aspect of insecurity of functioning' (68). This theorisation helps us to understand why migrants make certain choices and take certain risks as they come of age and navigate shifting contours of rights, and does so in a way that further undermines approaches that fail to consider agency from a bottom-up perspective. Like all of us, unaccompanied young migrants are not purely rational agents interacting with static opportunity structures. Luck, fear and serendipity also play their part.

Methodology and Ethics

This paper draws on semi-structured interviews with 27 former unaccompanied male minors (England 12; Italy 15) aged 18-26 living in two cities in England and Italy respectively at the time of interview (see Appendix D). The research focused on young men who make up the majority of unaccompanied minors arriving in Europe (see above) as part of a broader research agenda on migrant and refugee masculinities. The research builds on previous

comparative qualitative studies which have explored migrants' access to welfare and decision-making processes at the city level, such as Scarpa (2016) in Malmö and Genoa; and Korac (2009) in Rome and Amsterdam, and it has comparable strengths and limitations. Most significantly, it should be noted that there are important differences in welfare provisions geographically across both countriesⁱ (Allsopp et al. 2015; Fargion 2012) and allusions to national policies in this article should be understood within this context.

The data are drawn from a total dataset of 58 interviews (England 21 and Italy 37), 29 of which were with individuals aged under 18. Participants were identified through gatekeeper organizations and through snowball sampling. The sampling strategy did not seek to obtain a representative group of interviewees, but rather to maximize diversity and interview individuals with experience of the various possible legal statuses and possible positions in relation to immigration control and welfare apparatus (both statutory and non-statutory). This goal was largely achieved. The sample is also broadly reflective of national (and local) trends in the main differences in countries of origin between Italy and England.

This article is additionally informed by participant observation conducted by the author based in youth projects working with migrant and refugee youth in the two cities for periods of 8 and 7 months respectively (July 2015 – February 2016, Italy; and February 2016 – October 2017, England) and by interviews with welfare and immigration officials and third sector workers (England no.: 12 and Italy no.: 16). This sampling strategy for these interviews successfully captured the diversity of actors across the welfare landscape. The higher numbers of research participants in Italy can be explained in part by the less controlled research environment (itself a feature of the 'colander welfare' regime), in addition to the bigger population of unaccompanied youth in the city concerned. In part because the risk of

detention and deportation is experienced as less acute, this population is also more visible, clustered for example around train stations and food kitchens.

Ethical clearance for the research was given by the host University. The author conducted and translated interviews across languages (English, French and Italian) and twice used an Arabic interpreter. Artistic methods were also used both to foster trust and to provide alternative communication methods. Names used in this paper are pseudonyms, mostly chosen by research participants.

This research combined thematic and narrative analysis using Nvivo 11.1.1. A priori and emergent codes were created for thematic analysis and this was coupled with narrative analyses. Each thematic node was contextualized alongside a summary of the young person's migratory project, including their past, key facts about their life, the main objective of migration, and interaction with statutory and other sources of welfare and aspirations. Narrative analysis is primarily concerned with the relationship between events and how people understand, explain, come to understand and organise experience (Wiles et al. 2005). It considers narratives to be the means through which people make sense of the world. In particular, I drew on theories of 'critical moments' (Thomson et al. 2002), 'turning points' (Holmegaarda et al. 2012) and 'fateful moments' (Giddens 2001). Because of the importance of narrative, transcripts were read and analysed as 'wholes', and where follow-up interviews took place, as 'sequences'. This approach corresponds to the 'cross-sectional' analytical approach employed in the influential *Inventing Adulthoods* study of British youth transitions (Thomson et al. 2004). It also echoes the dual analytical approach employed in 'Young Lives', the longitudinal survey of childhood and youth poverty based at the University of Oxford (Morrow 2013). This mixed analytical strategy allowed me to situate individual

experience in a wider structural context in order to ensure its widest possible relevance (Thomson and Holland 2003).

The ‘types’ of immigration-welfare regime as experienced by this group (‘iron rod welfare’ and ‘colander welfare’) were identified, in keeping with the social policy tradition of the use of regime types to classify welfare arrangements according to various criteria (e.g Esping Anderson 1990). It is important to note, however, that the research informing this article took place between 2015 and 2017. In response to the so-called ‘European humanitarian refugee crisis’, the welfare-immigration control nexus was reshaped in England and particularly in Italy from the end of 2016 onwards. Italy introduced tough new measures of control of civil society welfare providers in major cities in particular. This tougher enforcement was interpreted by some as an expression of localized or national xenophobia, while others saw it as an ‘iron rod *from abroad*’ – or from the EU itself. Indeed, many of the increasingly hard measures (such as the ‘hot spots’ where new arrivals are now detained upon arrival in the South of Italy) were directly managed by EU home affairs agencies including Frontex, the EU border guard (for more information on this policy change, which was especially apparent in Italy’s cities and Southern arrival states, see Allsopp 2017b; Carrera et al. 2018a, 2018b). These findings should thus be read as a snapshot of the situation of a particular place and time. Ongoing research is required to assess the ongoing relevance of this typology in capturing the lived experiences of this group.

Findings: ‘Iron Rod’, ‘Colander Welfare’ and the Governance of Lived Experience

Table 1: A Typology of ‘Iron Rod welfare’ and ‘Colander Welfare’ for Unaccompanied Minors Coming of Age in England and Italy

Policy Dimension	England’s ‘Iron Rod Welfare’ Regime	Italy’s ‘Colander Welfare’ Regime
Importance of labour market in relation to immigration and opportunities for regularization	• No chance to regularize status through study or labour market integration. • No possibility to regularize status through post-18 visa for former unaccompanied minors. • Less significant unregulated labour market • Fewer opportunities to get documents through asylum system.	• Possibility to regularize status temporarily through study or labour market integration. • Possibility to regularize status through post-18 visa for former unaccompanied minors. • Significant unregulated labour market • More opportunities to get documents through asylum system e.g. through humanitarian protection.
Welfare and rights <i>the generosity and role of the state in the welfare mix</i>	• Strong statutory welfare support for those with regular legal status among this group post-18. Some reliance on informal welfare (social networks, charities, religious groups, refugee support organizations) among those with or without regular status. • Labour market less important to integration (more decommodification).	• Weak statutory welfare support for those with legal status post-18. Strong reliance on informal welfare (social networks, charities, religious groups, groups, refugee support organizations). • Labour market central to integration (high commodification)
Welfare-immigration control nexus <i>intersection between welfare and immigration enforcement</i>	• Strong link between access to welfare and immigration control/strong incursion of state into everyday life: fear of detention and deportation i.e. ‘harder to be illegal’.	• Weak link between access to welfare and immigration control. Not so strong incursion of state into everyday life: less fear of detention and deportation i.e. ‘easier to be illegal’.

Three primary institutional factors shaped the decision-making and lived experiences of unaccompanied minors as they came of age across the two national and city-level contexts.

There are captured in the imagery of the rigid English ‘iron rod welfare’ and more porous

Italian ‘colander welfare’: The different aspects of this typology are summarized in Table 1, above.

The different contexts produced significantly different opportunity structures for unaccompanied minors which they negotiated using a range of strategies. This included moving strategically between countries in order to maximize perceived opportunities, thus undermining the sedentary bias of most welfare typologies that assume that an individual remains in one place over time.

Labour market

The migration projects of the minors who chose to stay in Italy rather than transit through were often highly dependent on the structural opportunities that existed for acquiring documents and employment post-18. An NGO worker and a local authority official referred to this policy respectively as an ‘ERASMUS scheme’ and ‘boarding school for Albanian minors’. Unlike those seeking asylum, such as most Afghans and West Africans, Albanian and Egyptian unaccompanied minors often intended to stay for a period of several years only. In 2016, 2,685 non-asylum seeking unaccompanied minors were granted post-18 leave in Italy for study, training or work purposes, the majority from Albania and Egypt (Italian Ministry of Work and Social Policy 2016). At first glance this appears to be a relatively small percentage of the 62,672 unaccompanied minors who were recorded as arriving in Italy between 2011 and 2016 (the main countries of origin being Eritrea, Egypt, Gambia, Nigeria and Syria), though it should be noted that numbers increased dramatically, from 4,209 in 2011 to 25,846 in 2016, and that this figure is only relevant to those young people *turning 18 and staying in Italy*. We know that the majority transit through Italy to other EU member

states (Save the Children 2017). During the ethnographic research conducted in a transit centre for migrants in Rome for this research between July 2015 and February 2016 alone, 15,000 unaccompanied minors – mostly from Eritrea – were counted as having passed through the city. Official statistics nevertheless show that from 2017 onwards, probably because of the closure of access routes to northern EU Member states, more Eritreans are choosing – or forced – to remain in Italy and claim asylum there (Ibid.).

Among those who had successfully settled in Italy through their own definition were Erfanullah from Afghanistan who was aged 26 at the time of interview and 13 upon arrival in Italy. He was granted asylum and now runs a sushi business. He also offers traineeships to unaccompanied minors to help them to regularize their status or – for those with refugee or humanitarian leave – to find jobs and financial independence when they turn 18. 12 of the 15 interviewees in Rome reported that they saw some possibility of a short- or long-term future in Italy. Three (Lodi, Kaled and Joshi) were able not only to hold down service-sector employment in Italy but also to realize other recreational functionings which they felt to be important alongside this, working with the support of civil society mentors as a photographer, videographer and musician respectively.

Not all stories were so positive, and Italy's pathway to legality for unaccompanied non-asylum-seeking minors also has multiple problems; indeed, its classically Mediterranean welfare focus on social insurance and commodification frequently led to situations of labour market exploitation. Interviewees spoke of 'friends' who had paid employers for them to grant them the contract needed for an adult visa and most of them had, at some point, been expected to work for free. Working in the unregulated labour market was thus required as a

condition of entry into the formal labour market. Indeed, in Italy's dualist labour market model there exists significant fluidity between the two.

Mohammed, aged 18, and from Egypt, worked in appalling conditions in a restaurant unpaid for months hoping to receive a contract at the end of it. Joshi, aged 24, from Afghanistan, had had a similar experience. Declaring that 'migrants are the new slaves of the world', he was now committed to only ever working for 'good Italians'. Because of the time-limitation of the post-18 Italian work and study visa, many young people experienced finding a job a 'race against time', or felt restricted to opportunities available within their social networks because of a range of factors, including poor Italian language skills. For those in England, pre-existing English language skills were a clear advantage in finding formal employment.

In contrast to the situation in Italy, the only way for unaccompanied minors to stay in England is through the asylum system. Outside of the asylum system they have scant possibility of regularizing their status. It is generally illegal for young people refused asylum in the UK to work, however some young people in the research were taking this risk to earn money to pay legal fees for appeals no longer financed by the UK government. This unregulated work was being done at a double cost – exploitation by employers on the one hand, and with the risk of arrest by the state on the other (see Section iii below). The nefarious mechanisms of control that employers can exercise over precarious workers such as refused asylum seekers have been well documented in past scholarship (Anderson 2010; Lewis et al. 2015). Several young people commented that wages were much higher in English cities compared to Italian cities – even for irregular work – but that such jobs came with a greater risk of being caught in England. Pakir, a 23-year-old Afghan who arrived in England aged 15 to seek asylum and was refused re-migrated to Italy. In Italy he has been

granted five years' humanitarian protection and at the time of fieldwork he was awaiting his documents. He made the comparison thus: 'in the UK there is [good] work but no papers, in Italy there are papers but no [good] work!' Pakir was detained for several months following a Home Office raid on a shop where he was working without papers in England and feared deportation.

In the English city, as in the Italian one, many young people were enrolled in vocational courses, but there was a perception that in England it was more difficult to find skilled work (e.g. as a mechanic or a chef) without qualifications. This was less so with sectors such as catering and the hotel trade. Moreover, several young people in both countries were barred from accessing vocational courses or work because they were waiting for or did not have documents. Young people often made a tradeoff in education and training between short-term and long-term gains. Kaz aged 22 from Morocco, explained that he was torn between getting money quickly as a pizza courier and spending his time investing in training as a car mechanic to secure a better job later. Many young people faced pressures to send money home quickly, to pay off debts for their journeys or to save money to bring family members over once they had secured a legal status that granted them rights of family reunification. Erfanullah, 26, could bring his mother to Italy through family reunification rights but it was expensive, he explained. He 'worked like a dog at three jobs'. Meanwhile, Esatullah, 22, from Afghanistan who arrived in England at the age of 13 was, at the time of the research, doing well-paid but incredibly violent work which he felt re-triggered his symptoms of PTSD. He could not turn down such work, he explained, because of the pressure to pay for his sisters' weddings and dowries abroad. I explore the gendered aspects of family obligations for this group post-arrival as well as gendered reasons for flight in more detail elsewhere (see e.g. Allsopp 2017a).

This section has demonstrated that immigration policies and labour markets interact to shape different opportunity structures and outcomes for specific groups of migrants in different EU countries over time. The two national – and city-level contexts – offered different challenges and opportunities in terms of earning money and getting papers in the short and longer term. One 23-year-old Afghan encountered during the ethnographic research who had arrived in England unaccompanied at the age of 13 was earning an annual salary of £24,000 in a restaurant where he had worked as a skilled *sous chef* for over four years. Despite this secure labour market position, he was facing deportation from England following a refused asylum claim; meanwhile, in Italy, he would have had the opportunity to regularize his status. Despite its significant problems, Italy's post-18 regularization pathway for former unaccompanied minors is one of the few EU models that seek to provide pragmatic pathways to legality and labour market integration for this vulnerable group. All the young people in the Italian sample except one who sought to stay in Italy, had acquired, or were in the process of acquiring, some form of legal documentation and most were engaged in an internship or training programme. This contrasted starkly with the high numbers transitioning into illegality as they became adult in England. Meanwhile, statistics on recognition rates suggest that most of the non-asylum young people who had secured employment in Italy and been able to stay after they turned 18 – from countries including Bangladesh, Egypt and Albania – would also probably have been refused asylum and returned to their countries of origin from England, whether as children or as adults. While England also routinely refuses asylum applications from West Africans, many young people in the research from countries including the Gambia, Ghana and Senegal could stay in Italy – albeit often in adverse conditions – with some form of humanitarian or refugee protection without the fear of deportation to the country they had fled.

Welfare and social rights

The different rights available to migrants in England and Italy are linked to the countries' different welfare regimes, the role of the state in the welfare mix and its relative 'generosity' to migrants (and citizens). Welfare regime theory argues that, despite variations in regional/local level practice, different configurations of formal and informal welfare provisions in the welfare mix exist more commonly in different types of welfare regime (e.g. see Esping-Andersen 1990 on social security benefits). This social policy approach allows us to explore the relationships between statutory service provision, private provision and voluntary and informal sectors. However, as argued at the start of this article, typologies of welfare regimes are usually static and frequently fail to take into consideration the specific experiences of migrant populations (Sainsbury 2006; Bruzelius et al. 2016). Welfare services for refugees and asylum seekers across EU Member States have also increasingly become separated from the jurisdiction of mainstream welfare systems in recent years. This can be linked to broader processes of the 'hollowing out' (Jessop 2000) and 'dispersal' (Clarke 2004) of the welfare state, as well as – in the English context – to increasing conditionality (Dwyer 2004). Recent austerity has also had an impact on and reshaped welfare arrangements in all EU countries, including for this group (Humphries and Sigona 2017). It is therefore not surprising that the welfare experiences of this group of migrants do not fit neatly within standard welfare typologies and that we need a new typology to account for their experiences of 'English iron rod welfare' and 'Italian colander welfare'.

England has traditionally been categorized, in terms of Esping-Anderson's 1990 model of the welfare configurations of capitalist countries, as a liberal nation, and Italy as an example of a

Southern, or Mediterranean, welfare country (Ferrera 2010). The main characteristics of the Italian welfare state are identified as a less present state ('laissez-faire' attitude); heavy reliance on family networks (Naldini 2004); the importance of the Catholic tradition (Lynch 2009); and a history of clientelism (Ferrera 1996; Sciortino 2004). Other scholars have pointed out the contrast between Italian welfare generosity to the elderly (state pensions being the overwhelming focus of national welfare expenditure) in contrast with cuts to services such as education for Italy's youth (Mazzola et al. 2015). Italy has the largest proportion of elderly citizens (aged over 65) in Europe (cited in Mazzola et al. 2015). The unsustainability of its national welfare set-up was argued by some policy makers and politicians interviewed for this research as a reason for fostering more inclusive policies towards unaccompanied minors who they saw as being able to contribute to welfare through taxes as well as serving to mitigate the demographic phenomenon of the ageing population.

In her study of the integration of refugees from the former Yugoslavia in Rome, Korac finds that Italy's clientelist welfare regime does have a bearing on the incorporation of migrant populations, evolving into a 'self-reception system' within which migrants are reliant on ethnic networks (2001). In England, meanwhile, the state is more active in social security (though not as much as would be expected in a social democratic regime such as Sweden). Korac finds the same with the comparative example of the Netherlands relative to Italy (2001). Table 2 below details the different social rights available in the two national contexts.

Table 2: Comparative Social Rights

Welfare provision	England	Italy
Education	Under 16: Attend secondary school usually with British peers; special ESOL classes. 16-17: Access to college/vocational training. 18+: access to higher education if have legal status. Asylum seekers and those without papers are classed as international students and required to pay a fee.	Attend secondary school often in separate college classes. 16-17: Access to college/vocational training. 18+: access to higher education if have legal status. Asylum seekers and those without papers are classed as international students and required to pay a fee.
Housing	Under 16: foster care. 16-17: semi-autonomous living arrangement – tends to be 4 unaccompanied minors sharing a house with a bedroom each. 18+: transfer to NASS adult asylum care system OR if classified as ‘care leaver’ transfer to social housing.	Under 16: sometimes foster care or centre. 16-17: semi-autonomous living arrangement or big centre: usually sharing a in a centre with 5-100 unaccompanied minors. 18+: if have some form of legal status or still waiting for decision, can stay for an initial period of 6 months in SPRAR adult asylum centre. This can be extended in exceptional cases or after 6 months in the case of homelessness.
Social security	Under 18: allowance in accordance with rules or as for British children in care. 18+: transfer to NASS adult asylum allowance of £36.50 per week OR if classified as ‘care leaver’ transfer to social housing and entitled to more generous care leaver benefit.	Under 18: No direct cash allowance. Phone credit and transport ticket provided and vouchers for clothes. 18+: SPRAR allowance given along with vouchers for clothes.
Health care	Under 18: Free primary and secondary state-funded health care. 18+: If irregular immigration status, required to pay for secondary health care.	Under 18: Free primary and secondary health care. 18+: Free primary and secondary state-funded health care.
Family reunification	Under 18: No rights to family reunification for refugee or other children. 18+: right to family reunification for refugees and those with other legal statuses provided certain financial conditions are met.	Under 18: In practice right to family reunification for refugee children but not very operational in practice. 18+: right to family reunification for refugees and those with other legal statuses provided certain financial conditions are met.
Legal assistance	Under 18: Free. 18+: restricted.	Under 18: Free. 18+: restricted.
Social care arrangement	Social worker.	Guardian and educators in centres.

In what one Italian volunteer called Italy's 'survival of the fittest' welfare setup, only those who had the social capital or *savoir faire* were able to succeed, often drawing on resources of working irregularly (e.g. street vending) practiced in their countries of origin to survive. For others, religious or civil society networks – as mentioned above – provided important resources.

Those without social networks often felt that as they turned 18 they had become stuck in Italy almost by accident, or had been sold a false dream. The cut-off in support at the age of 18 was felt acutely. Adult centres for asylum seeking migrants and refugees are only guaranteed for six months and several participants consequently became street homeless during the research. Several research participants from Eritrea commented that they had migrated onwards to England specifically because of their personal experiences of Italy as a place that could not offer the desired level of protection or welfare. Ali from Eritrea, aged 18, who had been in England for 18 months at the time of the research, explained that the Italian welfare model was the same as back in his country where 'there is no-one to help you...you have to farm to be alive' (see Gough and Wood 2004 for a typology of insecurity and welfare regimes in the global south)

For those with social networks, the lack of state protection was not an obstacle to moving forward and securing basic functionings and capabilities, including safety. Without such links, conditions could be extremely hard. Driss, aged 20, from Mali, was spending his nights sleeping in a park in Rome at the time of our interview, where he had recently experienced police violence. Having stayed in one adult asylum support centre for six months, he had to wait for six months before being granted access to another. He saw his lack of networks,

coupled with institutional racism in the city and a delay in receiving his formal paperwork, as the main barrier to securing shelter and work.

Meanwhile, in England, post-18, unaccompanied young men could access a relatively high level of statutory welfare support through either having a legal status and/or being classed as a 'care leaver'. In UK law, a 'care leaver' is defined as 'a young person who has 'been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14' and has been 'in care on their 16th birthday'. The majority of unaccompanied asylum seeking minors in England fall outside this category, having been age assessed as 16 or over upon arrival. Migrant 'care leavers', like UK citizen care leavers, can access differentiated rights and entitlements according to a range of formal criteria based on individual need as they reach various biologically defined age boundaries. Previous research has documented wide discrepancies in practice in terms of how such rights and entitlements are interpreted and employed (Allsopp et al. 2015; Humphries and Sigona 2017) and in relation to the controversial position of age assessments in this context as a bridge to accessing certain social rights.

Individuals with refugee protection and/or care leaver status in the English city sample felt largely supported as they became adult as they could access welfare benefits without pressure to enter the labour market immediately. They thus experienced a high level of decommodification relative to most English workers. The way in which this specific group of migrant young people experience the welfare mix in England is less consistent with common typologies of welfare regimes than in Italy. In a liberal welfare regime, such as England, one would expect to see low levels of social security and high commodification – with young people generally and migrants in particular facing restricted social rights, whether this be access to social housing (Wilkinson and Ortega-AlcÁzar 2017), legal protection from low

pay and exploitation, or higher education. In reality, however, because of their protected status as ‘care leavers’, those on the right side of the ‘iron rod’ in this group experienced a full set of welfare rights as a privileged category more akin to what a social democratic welfare regime might provide (see Table 2, above). Indeed, in 2017 the UK government argued that the supposed ‘pull factor’ created by a high level of welfare provision justified the closure of legal routes to Britain and ever tighter enforcement of the external border in Calais and the curtailment of family reunification rights to prevent further minors undertaking dangerous journeys to England (Allsopp 2017b).

Those research participants who were refused asylum and who fell outside the care leaver category were transferred after 18 to the less generous separate welfare system for adult asylum seekers. Faced with this ‘hostile environment’, a small number of young people in the research who were refused protection in England ‘went underground’. They felt that the conditional rights offered them (as either adult asylum seekers or as refused asylum seekers who were in the process of appealing or expected to return) were not, in Wolff and De Shalit’s terms, a ‘genuine opportunity for secure functioning’ (2010). They would rather try their luck working illegally or migrating onwards to a different country where the structural opportunities were different. Several young people, for example, spoke of trying to get to Canada or the United States. In practice, only one person preemptively migrated from England to another European country *prior* to being detained and deported (Pakir). It was more common for young people to re-migrate to another EU country *after* they had been deported from England to their country of origin (most commonly to Afghanistan), or to migrate onwards from Italy to other parts of Europe. In other words, for those seeking asylum, Italy remained a clear second choice where the level of protection and social rights

was perceived as inferior, even if it did provide relative safety from immigration control compared to England. The next section explores this in more detail.

Access to welfare and immigration enforcement

The previous section suggested that in England the difference between having residence documents or not was more acutely perceived in welfare terms. The promise of greater support in England was true for those granted asylum or classed as ‘care leavers’ but, for those refused and on the wrong side of the ‘iron rod’ – even those *with* care leaver status still under the care of local authorities – the future appeared bleak. Cal arrived in England at the age of 13. He was 18 and at the time of research was living in a flat paid for by Income Support and studying at college. Yet, since he had been refused asylum, being a ‘care leaver’ did not stop the Home Office from threatening him with detention and deportation to Afghanistan. In all matters concerning adults, immigration enforcement trumps welfare rights. In what may seem a paradoxical situation, a minor who is given full entitlement to welfare provision as a ‘care leaver’ – up to the age of 25 in some cases – can simultaneously be detained and deported from the country from one day to the next. In the UK’s ‘hostile environment’ (Allsopp 2017), the division between social policy and immigration and asylum policy has been blurred. The government seeks to deter future arrivals by restricting access to welfare for certain categories of migrants and by making access to welfare conditional on consent to immigration control. For those without secure legal status such as many former unaccompanied minors, this includes the possibility of detention and possible return to the country of origin.

Omid, aged 19 from Eritrea, explained how he nearly found himself on the wrong side of the ‘iron rod’ when he broke his leg playing football and was rushed to hospital - only for them to call the Home Office. The receptionist at the hospital also called the Eritrean Embassy, a move which could potentially have put his life and that of his family back home at risk. Luckily, as an asylum seeker Omid was entitled to free treatment from the British National Health Service (NHS). However, if he had been a refused asylum seeker, it remains unclear whether the hospital would have been required to charge him medical fees and also to report him to the Home Office. According to the Department of Health, the Home Office made 8,127 requests to them for data in the first 11 months of 2016 and this led to 5,854 people being traced by immigration enforcement teams (Bulman 2017). Colleges and universities have also been required to conduct document checks, a situation which led to several young people in this research being unable to pursue their education. Such ‘bordering practices’ can give extraordinary powers to ‘street level bureaucrats’ (Lipsky 1980) through practices of ‘everyday bordering’ (Yuval Davis 2017). This level of discretion can serve to help or to hinder individual migrants. Both Ali, aged 18, and Omid, aged 19, from Eritrea, were unable to take courses at college because they were refused asylum seekers and had been asked for papers. They explained that a friend who was in the same position, however, had been able to keep studying at another college in the city because the institution ‘turned a blind eye’. Meanwhile, their friend Tig, aged 18 from Eritrea, who had been in England for two years at the time of research, could study whatever he liked, having been granted refugee status several months previously. The situation felt especially cruel to Omid, since he and Tig had travelled together and were sharing accommodation in the city, having fled what he perceived as analogous situations of persecution. Previous scholarship has documented poor practices and inconsistencies in asylum decision making in England (Gill et al. 2018) which is said to be biased by a culture of ‘denial’ and ‘disbelief’ (Souter 2011).

In contrast to the English context, where the nexus between welfare and legal status is policed by an ‘iron rod’, Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini (2011) highlight the growing separation and contradictions between internal and external migration management policies in Italy. Once in Italy, it is relatively easy to avoid detention and removal – to exploit the metaphor, one can navigate one’s way through one of a series of holes in the colander, rather than finding oneself rigorously placed on either side of an iron rod regime of entitlement and control. In Italy, the ‘colander welfare’ image captures a welfare dynamic in which access to social rights is considered to be less comprehensive and, in the welfare mix, the state plays less of a role in financing, providing and regulating services for citizens. The lesser reliance on the state as a provider of services – coupled with the greater distance between statutory service providers and immigration control – creates a dynamic whereby young people in the research reported experiencing more freedom in pursuing their goals and looking after their wellbeing, even if this meant that the support and services they sought were often inadequate or not available. The ‘holes’ in the colander denote gaps in protection - but also possibilities to navigate alternative welfare strategies independently of the state. This is important when the state is such an ambiguous actor in one’s life, as it is for this group of migrants. These ‘holes’ commonly included more possibilities for working irregularly to secure an income in the absence of statutory support; and being able to rely on an important charitable, and often religious, infrastructure without fear of being targeted by the police. As Driss, aged 20 and from Mali, explained, ‘In Italy there are some advantages to not being strict about the rules...’. However, as noted above, the dynamic in Italy nevertheless changed significantly from 2016 onwards, after this research had ended (Carrera et al. 2018a, 2018b).

In Italy, the contracting out of services for asylum seekers to agents independent of the state (and often financed directly by the EU since 2015) creates a *de facto* firewall between service providers and the immigration control powers of the state – but also in some cases poor transparency and corruption. In England, meanwhile, services for unaccompanied minors are run by the state, or, where they are contracted out – for example, to private fostering arrangements – these institutions are bound by strict data sharing agreements (Humphries and Sigona 2017).

Discussion and Conclusions

This article began with a question: why did Pakir, as an undocumented 18-year-old Afghan, forfeit his right to a bed-and-breakfast and weekly allowance in the El Dorado of England and climb back under a lorry through the Channel and relocate to Italy, retracing the steps of a treacherous and illegal journey already once made.

Answer: To get to the other side.

One way of understanding such a choice is to see the young man as willing to make sacrifices of some social rights and take a risk in the short term for longer term gain. It can be argued that his lack of legal status and the risk of detention in and deportation from Europe to Kabul are two such ‘corrosive disadvantages’ (Wolff and De Shalit 2007). In this context, for Pakir, Italy provided a place of relative sanctuary. This article supports prior research that has demonstrated that unaccompanied young migrants’ pursuit of subjective wellbeing consists of strategies to secure a modicum of material welfare in the short term while securing ontological security in the longer term as they come of age (Chase 2012; Allsopp, Chase and

Mitchell 2015). Their pursuit of what we have defined, according to Wolff and De Shalit's definition, as 'genuine opportunities for secure functionings' (2010) often entails sacrificing one functioning for others; and making decisions based on knowledge of policy opportunity structures which are often in themselves geographically shifting, time-limited, risky and insecure. This article has argued that immigration regimes, labour markets and welfare regimes interact to shape the opportunity structures and outcomes of specific groups of migrants over time.

It has been argued that neither traditional welfare typologies nor current frameworks for understanding opportunity and risk within the 'common' European asylum policy framework can account for such behaviour. This is because they fail to take account of shifting bureaucratic categorizations and stratification of social rights experienced by unaccompanied young migrants and refugee men as they come of age, take for granted the static bias of welfare regime typologies, and ignore the increasing intersection of access to social rights and immigration control which poses specific risks to this group. Indeed, this article has suggested that the proximity between access to welfare and immigration control is a key determinant of whether unaccompanied young migrants who are refused asylum 'go missing' in institutional terms and of how they interact with statutory and non-statutory welfare provision over time.

A tentative model of 'English iron rod welfare' and 'Italian colander welfare' has been advanced in this gap to account for the lived experiences of this group of migrants in the two cities under study in relation to their national labour markets, welfare regimes and immigration and asylum policies. While England's 'iron rod welfare' arrangement denotes a comprehensive system of social rights for those on the 'right side of the law', it also includes

rigid policing of the boundaries between those on the ‘inside’ and those on the ‘outside’. The ‘iron rod’ metaphor also evokes the fear of the hard face of immigration control and enforcement articulated in a context in which access to welfare is increasingly policed by everyday agents of border control. In the context of an increasingly blurred distinction between care and control, in Italy it appears that it may be the *absence* of the helping hand of the state which leaves free rein for certain types of sanctuary and human flourishing. ‘In Italy it’s not like the UK with CCTV’, explained Tabir, aged 21, from Afghanistan, who had twice been detained and then deported from England – once for working irregularly and once for loitering in the street; for him Italy was a more favourable context where ‘it’s easier to be invisible’. As a representative from the Italian Ministry of the Interior also conceded in an interview for this research, ‘the difference with the UK - what is it? That [here] if they have no documents no-one will escort these lads to the border’.

The question of young people’s possible secondary migration and evasion of state structures of support and control raises the uncomfortable question of *the rule of law*. But as Castles (2010: 311) explains, from a ‘bottom-up migrant view’ immigration policies are seen as ‘setting opportunity structures’ whose potentialities for migrants may differ from the intentions of government. As he writes:

‘People lucky enough to enjoy a middle class position in developed countries tend to have a positive view of the state and the law. The majority of the world’s population, who live in inefficient, corrupt and sometimes violent states, may see things differently. They have to cope despite the state, not because of it. From this perspective migration rules become just another barrier to be overcome in order to survive. Potential migrants do not decide to stay put simply because the receiving state says they are not welcome – especially if the labour market tells a different

story. Policies become opportunity structures to be negotiated....migrants have developed forms of collective, individual and community resistance that undermine top down migration management.'

Often asylum seekers' bottom-up perceptions of potential harms wielded by the institutions claiming to act in their best interests have been vindicated. This was the case of the recognition by the European Court of Human Rights in November 2014 in the case of *Tarakhel vs. Switzerland* that individualized guarantees were required to protect vulnerable categories of refugees from potential harm prior to being transferred to Italy (Peers 2014). It is also arguably evidenced in the case of Pakir, as well as in the case of four of the other Afghans interviewed for this research who had re-migrated to Europe (to Italy) following deportation from England to Afghanistan. This remigration dynamic has been noted elsewhere as a specific trend because of particular insecurities facing this group (Schuster and Madjidi 2013).

These young Afghan men hoped to avoid the 'iron rod' and find a way through the holes of the 'colander' regime. Depending on which opportunities became available to them, or closed over time, they chose from a mix of being able to work and earn money, the possibility of getting papers and protection from deportation. So they mixed from two different systems as they came of age to find the best deal for themselves, straddling the best features of the two structures in terms of the opportunities provided by the respective urban English and Italian labour market setups, welfare regimes and the risks associated with access to welfare and immigration control. This situation of flux – what Long (2013a) has called the mobile pursuit of durable solutions – challenges the static bias of most welfare regime theories and immigration and asylum policy theories such as the common European asylum policy which

are devised from a monist, state-down perspective (Allsopp and Chase 2017). Indeed, the data presented in this article tentatively suggest the existence of a kind of *de facto* DIY European asylum of which mobility is a fundamental part.

Paper Three: Agent, Victim, Soldier, Son: Intersecting Masculinities in the European ‘Refugee Crisis’

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Abstract

Many of the complexities of modern masculinity are pulled to the surface in migration and refugee movements. This Chapter explores how over the course of the European ‘refugee crisis’ which began in 2014, the traditional trope of militarized masculinity has been set against the figures of ‘man as provider’ and ‘threatening young male’ in subjective and popular narratives. For some men, the decision to flee is a decision to protect their families without violence; others flee war only to find new manifestations of it at Europe’s many borders. Their accounts frequently betray a vulnerability which challenges not just subjective ideas of manhood and strength, but also reveals the fallibility of the militarized nation state system in which it has been argued that masculinity finds its most violent manifestation. The Chapter demonstrates that masculinity in this context is fluid and intersectional: at once subjective and structural. Hegemonic tropes are traceable to the legal and social constructs that migrants face upon arrival in Europe as well as being authored by or belonging to the migrant men. I argue that a more intersectional approach to refugee masculinities is required which recognizes the gender specific displacement experiences of boys and men and acknowledges that they cannot be cast as either victims or soldiers but should be seen as at once vulnerable and agentic.

Introduction

A tinny tinkle of bullets sounds intermittently in the Fiat Punto as I travel to the clinic with Madu* and his social worker for an assessment of his torture scars. ‘What are you doing?’ I ask Madu, tilting my neck round towards the back seat. ‘Shooting Libyans’ he replies straightforwardly: ‘bang, bang, dead, die, BANG!’ The 17-year-old (initially assessed by the Italian authorities to be an adult, despite presenting as much younger than even this stated age) collapses onto the backseat, pretending to be dead. Does he understand the English writing on his second-hand T-shirt, I wonder: *Save Water, Drink Beer*? ‘Now it’s your turn’ he offers a second later, jumping back to life. I accept the phone thrust towards me and become a white, male American soldier patrolling a warehouse in...Iraq? Afghanistan? Libya? I’m shot at immediately and I lose a life. ‘Way too slow!’ Madu chastises.

I’m trying to imagine what this game is like for Madu whose enslavement in Libya en route to Europe evokes a chain of traumatic memories: the black man who was lynched before him, the regular beatings he endured at the hands of the smugglers alongside his fellow migrant boys and men. In the waiting room at the clinic his phone transforms into a family photo album: ‘this is my sister, my mum, my dog...’ He’s used a Photoshop app to border them with pink love hearts and baby blue swans and birds. I’m moved as he repeatedly kisses his phone screen. His father, whose hand administered many of the scars the doctor is here to see, is conspicuous in the photos by his absence.

In this ethnographic vignette, Madu exhibits traits linked to various intersecting masculinities: home sick and deeply vulnerable in the fashion of a stereotypical feminized refugee, he can also be cast as a potential soldier who had, just two days previously, thrown a

kick so powerful that it smashed a wardrobe at his shelter accommodation.

The lived experiences of young men like Madu are often invisible in both media and academic treatment of displacement (Rajaram 2002; Lewis 2014; Griffiths 2015); it is frequently the (child) soldier narrative that dominates and men's vulnerabilities are ignored. For the history books tell us that while the men stay and fight heroically, it is the women and children who flee. 'Woman and children first!' From the historic Titanic to the contemporary flotilla of migrant boats with distress flares aflame in the Mediterranean Sea, it is a common refrain. Where the identities of refugee men are discussed in popular culture, meanwhile, they are usually linked to narratives surrounding the 'dangerous' refugee that may be a threat to economic and political stability in Europe.

These tropes do not just appear in an apolitical vacuum but are initiated and enacted by individuals in a way that sustains wider structural regimes. In her analysis of the politics of masculinity and femininity and nationalism, Cynthia Enloe has demonstrated how the binary of 'all the men are in the militias and all the women are victims' is orchestrated by elites to propel violence in wartime. Meanwhile, Turner has argued that 'women are construed as more 'true' refugees, being the victims rather than the perpetrators of war and violence' in a way that propels humanitarianism (2000: 8).

While women's gender identities have in recent decades been accorded a sophistication of analysis in academia that now embraces intersectional identities as a core component, analysis of men's gender identities is less evolved. Even today, while war and peace studies dedicates increasing attention to questions of masculinities (e.g. Kronsell and Svedberg 2011; Sjoberg and Via 2010), books about gender and refugeehood still tend to almost exclusively

focus on refugee girls and women (e.g. Crawley 2001; Freedman 2015). Whether civilians or fighters, women's gender specific vulnerabilities are needless to say, as this volume testifies, substantial and rightly cannot be ignored. Yet it is only in the last decade that men's gender specific vulnerabilities in war and displacement are starting to be documented and that the international community has begun to recognise, for example, the extent to which sexual violence is used as a weapon against men as well as women. Russell (2007) reports that 'in the last decade, sexualized violence against men and boys – including rape, sexual torture, mutilation of the genitals, sexual humiliation, sexual enslavement, forced incest and forced rape – has been reported in 25 armed conflicts across the world' (22). If one expands this tally to include cases of sexual exploitation of boys displaced by violent conflict, the list includes 59 armed conflicts. Pockets of research stand out in this emergent field as slightly more developed, such as the burgeoning research on the experiences of sexual minority men among refugee populations (e.g. Berg and Milibank 2009; Lee and Brotman 2011); so too that of refugee men with disabilities (Couldrey and Herson 2010).

Segal has argued that it is men themselves that have been largely silent about their experiences of personal trauma or vulnerability during war (2008: 32). And indeed for many men, whether civilians caught up in the fighting or soldiers on the frontline, suffering remains a taboo (Jaji 2007). While it was once argued that women's experiences of war were ignored in part because they were harder to research (Enloe 2004), male research participants may be similarly hard-to-reach for the purpose of this research agenda: there is a common albeit under researched and anecdotal understanding that refugee men may be reluctant to share experiences of vulnerability with researchers.

Yet it is refugee men that have been the protagonists of recent migratory movements towards

Europe. To take a snapshot, in October 2015, 94,655 men claimed asylum in EU countries compared to 30,395 women, 39,710 boys and 18,635 girls (Eurostat 2016). As refugee movements to Europe continue, however, it should be noted that the proportion of women is growing and refugee movements are less and less ‘male’ (UNICEF 2016).

As a consequence of the predominance of men in refugee movements to Europe in the last two years, new notions of what it means to be a man and to be a refugee are starting to emerge in subjective and mainstream accounts of the ‘European refugee crisis’. By virtue of their gender (and often religion), many male refugees have been cast as potential rapists and terrorists, catalysing much of the resistance to the European Refugees Welcome movement (Rettberg and Gajjala 2015). In other spheres, the same men have been cast as loving fathers and breadwinners bravely setting out first to secure their family’s future. On Father’s Day 2016, the *Huffington Post* was among many major news outlets that ran tributes to refugee fathers caring for their children on the trail to Europe. ‘Some of the dads who deserve particular recognition this Father’s Day are those who day in and day out risk their own lives to protect their children and seek out a safer future for them’ reads the online tribute, before mounting a collage of photos of the top eight refugee dads of the year. One of the dads is shown hauling his infant from the Mediterranean Sea; another snuggles up to this daughter in a tent hastily erected at the Calais border; a thin man is shown crying as he walks his child towards the prospect of safety in the pouring rain (Frej 2016).

Methodology

This Chapter explores how we might begin to understand the conflicting accounts of refugee manhood perpetuated by the European ‘refugee crisis’ and also asks what a research agenda

in this area might look like. It is based on emerging findings that are in no way representative of the population of male refugees in Europe as a whole but rather a series of discrete discussions that highlight some initial themes for further exploration.

I spent more than one year conducting field research with young migrants and refugees over the course of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ between 2015 and 2016, based in two cities in Italy and the UK respectively. Over the course of this period I conducted semi-structured interviews with over 40 unaccompanied young men between the ages of 16 and 25 about their wellbeing and welfare experiences in Europe and spent time as a participant observer based in three support centres where I kept detailed field notes. The research received ethical clearance from the University of Oxford ethics committee and ethical considerations were addressed on an ongoing basis over the course of the research. The safety, wellbeing, consent and anonymity of participants were primary concerns at all times. Interview participants were selected through a mix of referrals from gatekeepers and support centres and through snow-ball sampling. I sought to diversify my sample by including individuals from a range of backgrounds and with different pathways through and experiences of the reception system (including those outside of it). The sample is in no way representative and the findings are not generalisable.

Ethnographic field notes from this research provide the source material for this Chapter. The notes detail my participant observation in support settings for refugees coupled with description and analysis of political developments and rolling media coverage of events in Italian and British media. What it means to be a migrant and a man emerged as a central theme in the men’s discussions and interviews with me, a white British female researcher. The Chapter is structured around three norms of refugeehood and masculinity that appear

most prominently in my analysis of these gendered accounts of the ‘refugee crisis’. They are (i) militarised masculinities; (ii) the man as father and provider; and (iii) the threat of the strong, young male. For each norm I lay out the main trope and its sub-tropes. I then provide some empirical counter-examples that seek to problematise them. In light of the evidence, the Chapter argues that the European ‘refugee crisis’ has exposed new ways to understand masculinities. Masculinity is revealed in this context, it is argued, to be fluid and intersectional: at once subjective and structural. Hegemonic tropes are traceable to the legal and social constructs that migrants face upon arrival in Europe as well as being authored by or belonging to the migrant men.

Militarised Masculinities

While it is widely recognised that masculinity, like all identities, is a fluid social and historical construct, the association of masculinity with traits including violence, aggression and dominance is seen as widespread and ‘hegemonic’ (Connell 1987), that is – propelled by ideological and cultural norms (184). As Segal explains, ‘traditionally, we have been encouraged to think that there is some natural bond between men and violence, simply given full reign in times of war’ (2008: 32). Some feminist scholars meanwhile have long argued that the ideology of militarism is intrinsically linked to masculinity and war (Enloe 2016; Cockburn 2007; Cohn and Enloe 2003). Mama contends in turn that ‘it is not that “masculinity” generates war, as the question has been put, but rather that the process of militarisation both draws on and exaggerates the bipolarisation of gender identities *in extremis*’ (2013).

For a long time, a common trope of centre-right European media has been to portray migrant and refugee men through this hegemonic lens, associating them by default with the violence they have fled (Rettberg and Gajjala 2015). This same trope has been used by politicians to cultivate fear, as when a Lebanese government minister claimed in September 2015, based on a ‘gut feeling’, that one in 50 Syrian refugees entering Europe could be jihadists sent by the Islamic state (Sims 2015). There has nevertheless also been a backlash to the default linking of – in particular Syrian – refugee men with the ISIS Jihadists they have fled. Following outrage at a widely shared photograph which was said to be of refugees attacking police with an ISIS flag, several major British newspapers published articles to explicitly ‘debunk’ the myth. This particular image, the *Independent* revealed, was falsely linked to the ‘refugee crisis’ having been taken at a protest in Germany in 2012 ‘before the rise of the so-called Islamic State’ (Griffin 2015). The newspaper went on to discredit a range of other photos popular on social media which explicitly depicted the refugees through the lens of militarized masculinities and claimed to ‘show Isis militants arriving in Europe, comparing images of men in battle dress and pictures of people arriving on the continent’ (Dearden 2015). The Pope is among other influential figures to have warned of the need to be vigilant of the encroachment of ISIS into Europe through the infiltration of refugee groups.

In the testimonies emerging from the male refugees who have fled such threats to Europe we can observe the crumbling of the stereotyping of refugee man as a potential threat in himself and the construction of a parallel identity of refugee man an individual in need of help. Men’s accounts frequently betray a vulnerability that challenges not just subjective ideas of manhood and strength, but also reveals the fallibility of the militarised nation state system in which it has been argued that masculinity finds its most violent manifestation (Mama 1998; Nagel 1998).

The border is the most vivid manifestation of this system; it is therefore unsurprising that it is here that refugees often experience a reification of militarised masculine identities and also find themselves at their most vulnerable. At the frontier, nationalism and militarised masculinities blur, making it a site of contested identities and power. The border is at once an assertion of – and a threat to – men’s historic monopoly of institutionalised force (Segal 2008: 30). Helms (2015) has documented how, as the Hungarian-Serbian border became militarized in the summer of 2015, for example, in media and government discourses the men seeking to cross were cast as soldiers. This image was sustained through a range of cultural tropes including directions from the government broadcaster not to show women and children on TV and a YouTube video posted by the mayor of one small town ‘full of tough-guy swagger and action-adventure aesthetics to convince migrants that coming through Hungary would be “a bad choice”’ (Helms 2015). The video starkly pits one group of men against the other.

When fighting did break out at the Röszke border crossing on 16 September 2015 following the introduction of a new, repressive set of Hungarian laws and the sealing of the border with a razor-wire fence, the fighting was between mostly male Hungarian border police and groups of mostly male refugees who had been barred from crossing the border from Serbia. Reporting from the border, one BBC journalist commented, ‘it looks like a war zone on the edge of the European Union’ (BBC News Channel 2015). A Hungarian spokesman on the BBC spoke of ‘an armed mob of hundreds of thousands of people’, meanwhile Serbia strongly condemned the violent retaliation and ‘brutal treatment’ from the Hungarian authorities (BBC News 2015). The men were depicted as belligerent fighters who, by virtue of their gender alone, posed a security threat. Their protests to cross were met with tear gas

and water canons. The refugees were cast as bandits, with hoods up and scarves over their faces to protect them from the tear gas as they tried to break down the fence which was, until just recently, open. ‘The young men’, the BBC reported, ‘decided to keep up their fight well into the night’. The human face of the refugees thus dissipated and border crossing became a combat sport for ‘real men’ once more. While boat arrivals are met with a humanitarian response, the land border is governed by law and order.

The resurgence of militarised masculinities at Europe’s physical borders is not a new phenomenon. In immigration detention – at once a physical and symbolic border – it has been documented that acts of desperation or peaceful resistance on the part of detained migrants are often militarised; recast as an attack and harshly repressed (Browning 2007). High razor wire topped fences, surveillance cameras, fingerprint checks, pat-down searches and multiple sets of locked doors create a culture of hostility towards refugees. As Griffiths reports in the UK context in one of the rare explorations of this area, ‘detention is experienced by those inside as punishment and tends to be indistinguishable from prisons to those outside. Those detained are associated with danger in the public imagination simply as a result of being held there’ (2015: 475). This sense of danger, Griffiths argues, is propagated by the media that portrays all ‘incidents’ as ‘violent events, in which the pent up frustration of angry men boils over, putting staff and the wider public in danger’, events which ‘bear little relation to the accounts given by those directly affected.’ Griffiths contrasts the media portrayal of a fire sparked by a ‘riot’ in an English detention centre in 2008 with the reality of a fire started by an individual. One man, cast as ‘dangerous’ simply by virtue of sharing the same nationality as the individual and preemptively moved to another centre, recounts to her his own experience of being a victim: ‘He told me of the panic as he and others begged for the officers to let them out but were refused, meaning that they were trapped inside what they

assumed was a burning building'. As in war as at the border: in the 'mob', the suffering individual disappears.

Problematizing militarised masculinities

Most of the men I spoke to who had travelled to Europe experienced the border similarly, as a site of vulnerability where one masculinity battled with another and most often, those in charge of the border struck hardest and last. In the most extreme examples I learnt of sexual abuse and exploitation committed by men against men and boys. One young man was being treated in hospital following an incident in Malta in which a police officer had inserted a broom stick into his anus.

In addition to frequent accounts of less extreme violence at the hands of border guards and the police, men spoke of subtler forms of control and humiliation. These often appeared to be linked to experiences of shame related to their perceived lack of power; in other words, shame and frustration on these occasions stemmed from their own perceived failure to fulfill patriarchal expectations and aspirations. One man who spoke jokingly about beatings at the hands of police and smugglers became noticeably angrier as he recounted how the first time he tried to reach Italy the coast guard sent them back to Libya. 'The Italian coast guards *taunted* us', he explained to me in an interview, 'they told us we were going to England and everyone cheered and then they broke the news and they were all just laughing at us...there were kids and men on the boat *in tears*.'

Men who make up most of the population in immigration detention across Europe often speak of a similar sense of powerlessness. 'I tried to kill myself twice in Brook House

because it was just too much', blogs a man who spent three years locked up in several of the UK's eleven detention centres. 'They put my name in a special book and then officers came to check on me every thirty minutes. I never liked it at all because I didn't want to see their faces. When I saw them, I felt angry' (H 2014). Reports of self harm and suicide are alarmingly high among men in immigration detention (Coffey et al. 2010) and also among asylum seekers awaiting decisions of applications for state protection who report a similar sense of powerlessness (Allsopp et al. 2015). A guard at a children's detention facility in Italy told me of some of the ways the men seek to challenge the authority and reassert their power in these highly militarised environments: 'they cannot hurt you so they hurt themselves', he explained. 'One guy, I was telling him off a bit, and he looked me dead in the eye, like dead in the eye, and put out a cigarette on his hand. I could smell the flesh...the Afghans always self harm...'

Where migrant and refugee men seek to shed this militarised mantle of masculinity and expose their vulnerability they are often feminised; cast as morally deviant; or depicted as 'other' to the dominant militarised model of a man in a time of war. Refugee men who have sewn their lips in protest to their treatment in countless protests across Europe, most recently in Calais but also on the Greek-Macedonian border, have their desperate behaviour recast as 'savage acts' which serve to 'other' them from western values. This otherness may be exaggerated for political effect, as in the Children Overboard scandal that hit Australia in 2001 when politicians falsely accused migrant men of the barbaric act of throwing their children into the water to prompt their own rescue. As one survivor explained to the media, 'Mr John Howard said we threw the kids in the water, but were just showing them for help' (cited in Toohey 2013). The episode recalls another powerful image from the Hungarian border: a baby, caught in a cloud of tear gas is screaming and its eyes stream with tears.

‘Look at this!’ shouts the father to the news camera. The image stands in contrast to what Rajaram (2002) refers to as the ‘de-politicised and de-historicised’ image of the refugee which – in humanitarian crisis and refugee reportage and in fundraising appeals – is commonly that of a passive mother holding her baby (Fair 1996; Johnson 2011). If the feminisation of the refugee equates to greater victimisation, assertions of agency by male refugees as in this example are met with an opposite response. A representative of the Hungarian government quickly accused the refugees of using their children as human shields (BBC News 2015). One man’s desperate act was thus recast as a tactic of war.

In other instances, the very fact of fleeing serves to open men up to the accusation that they are morally lacking and ‘unmanly’. A common argument is that the men fleeing are weak and should go back and pick up arms on behalf of their countries and their wives. ‘If they came here to fight, why don’t they go home and fight the regime instead of running away!’ comments someone on Facebook. ‘It will now be *our* men who risk their lives trying to save *their* women and children’. As Walker Rettberg and Gajjala report (2016) in their analysis of the #refugeesnotwelcome hashtag which trended in late 2015, Syrian refugees are most commonly portrayed in social media in militaristic terms as either terrorists or cowards. One popular image, the authors write, ‘shows a crowd of men in a train station, walking between two blue trains, some with their hands up in a way that looks more anxious than threatening, with the text: “2200 immigrants arrive in munich. no women no children. apparently only men [fl]ee [sic] ‘war zones’?”’ They give another example of a tweet that captures this mood: ‘if you’re a military age male who [fl]ees [sic] violence and leaves behind his women and children, you’ll never be an american! #refugeesnotwelcome’. Once again, militarism, masculinity and nationalism converge.

It can be seen then that at the level of the individual and the group, a particularly militaristic and in some cases nationalistic norm of masculinity is – across different settings – projected onto, enacted and resisted by refugee men. The refugees are expected to adhere to a certain violent norm; meanwhile state-sanctioned strategies seek to preemptively quash this by rendering them powerless through a range of symbolic and physical acts that embody this very militarism. It is at the border – an institution that structurally embodies the militarized nation state system – where we see the starkest manifestation of this ‘clash of masculinities’ but also where we see flashes of vulnerability that challenge the hegemonic norm in its subjective and structural forms.

The Father Figure and Provider

The second masculinity norm which features both in subjective accounts and popular renderings of migrant and refugee arrivals to Europe in 2015 and 2016 concerns men not as lone soldiers, but as fathers and providers. The figure of the man caring for his family not by taking arms, but by sheltering and nurturing his children, was immortalized in the field of war reporting with the famous image of Jamal al-Durrah and his 12 year old son Muhammad al-Durrah taken in the Gaza Strip on 30 September 2000 on the second day on the second Intifada at a time of rioting and violence in the region. Caught in the crossfire between Israeli and Palestinian factions, Jamal can be seen sheltering his son behind a bin as he cries out. In the next clip his son is shown collapsed on his father’s legs; the boy has been shot dead. The image sparked an outpouring of grief around the world. Its major resonance was also a cause for scandal, with an official Israeli report claiming that the image was staged. In the wake of political fighting about the photo, the father, Jamal, remained resolutely pacifistic, commenting in 2013, ‘...I am for peace. War is against humankind. I don't want others to

lose their sons. Which parent doesn't want their children to grow up safe and secure?' (cited in Sherwood 2013).

The 'refugee crisis' is one of the first times we have seen this pacifistic image of man as protector and nurturer as an actor in flight. Indeed, if the unfurling of and discussion around the 'refugee crisis' has served to largely rehearse established and historic tropes of men and violence, one area where we have seen something genuinely new is in the portrayal of migrant fathers. If the potential terrorist trope serves the interests of the securitization lobby; the father trope serve to construct a more humanitarian agenda. As such, many of the major humanitarian agencies including Save the Children and Médecins Sans Frontières have relied on images of fathers and their children in fundraising efforts responding to the 'refugee crisis'. Two photographs have resonated particularly strongly with the public; and they echo in some ways the famous Father and Child image of Muhammad and Jamal.

In the first image, Syrian Laith Majid clasps tightly his two children as he is brought ashore to the island of Kos in Greece after their tiny boat capsized; his face distorts in a look of abject desperation, his lip heaves over gritted teeth and tears stream from his eyes.

Photographer Daniel Etter who took the photo explained on Facebook that while he may not be 'the most emotional person...the father, Laith Majid, and his reaction when he and his family reached Greece still makes me cry.' This image of fatherhood was something new, and as such it sparked an empathetic reaction in a man who self-defined as unresponsive.

The second photo that has become iconic of the crisis is that of Abdullah, the father of Aylan Kurdi, the small boy whose corpse stirred Europe's conscience as it was photographed washed up on the shore in 2015. Standing in a freshly dug grave in his native town of

Kobane, Abdullah holds his son's body in a white shroud. A man to his left offers his own arms to support the little body. Abdullah's pained expression suggests he could collapse with grief at any moment, leaving the small boy to fall through his arms a second time.

The images of the two fathers depict new masculinities of war and flight that challenge the militarised assumptions that have surfaced at our borders. Yet while 'the refugee father' may have gained some traction as a figure of sympathy rather than fear during the 'crisis', there is evidence that this figure is similarly cast as a subject of distrust and rendered in a fashion that is overly simplistic.

Problematising the father figure

The migrant or refugee father has long been viewed as a figure of distrust in, for example, the British asylum and detention system. Indeed, fatherhood and husbandhood are aspects of the identity of migrant men that are frequently belittled (BID 2014). Again, in what is one of the only interventions on this topic, Griffiths cites examples of men in immigration and asylum detention in Britain being denied bail on the grounds they would abscond, despite having close ties to their children (2015: 479). She cites the case of one detained man 'who would cry throughout our meetings at the thought of being deported away from his baby' who was accused by an immigration officer of having his child in order to remain in the UK. 'In making asylum and detention decisions', Griffiths concludes, 'Home Office representatives routinely dismiss the importance of the men's role as fathers and husbands. Their correspondence often inexplicably has the "no close ties" box ticked even if they have partners and children in the United Kingdom, and I saw several official letters which argued that deportation would not interrupt family life as adequate paternal contact could continue

by telephone' (479).

While it is stressed here that contact between fathers and their families can continue post-deportation, fathers who arrive to seek asylum without their children are often viewed immediately with suspicion by the authorities and cast as 'lone, feckless' figures by the media. As in the tweets discussed above, the men are often accused of 'abandoning' their families and children back at home.

US Presidential candidate Donald Trump is among those apparently baffled by the prevalence of men arriving without their families. He stated recently in relation to the 'refugee crisis':

'...—three weeks ago I'm sitting and I'm saying, "isn't that a shame?"

And then I said to myself, "Wow. They're all men." You look at it. There are so few women and there are so few children. And not only are they men, they're young men. And they're strong as can be—they're tough looking cookies. I say, what's going on here?" (cited in Rhodan 2015).

In another comment, Trump specifically links the unaccompanied men to terrorist militancy: 'You look at the migration, it's young, strong men. We cannot take a chance that the people coming over here are going to be ISIS-affiliated' (cited in Rhodan 2015).

Many of these young men have left their families behind at one point in the journey and moved on alone, partly to escape the lack of opportunities to provide for their families in a first safe country. Researchers have documented the relationship between self-esteem and

coping strategies among male refugees and their ability to feel that they are able to provide for their families in a time of crisis. Turner (2000:8) reports, for example, the damaging effect of aid programmes that ignore the breadwinner function of men in certain contexts and instead exclude them with the effect of causing shame and negative behaviors among men. As Helms too explains,

‘[R]efugees typically face restrictions or bans on legal work or schooling in neighboring countries that shelter the vast majority of them. Their lives are stalled...The most rational and responsible thing for a husband, father, or son to do is to try to get to a more economically dynamic and stable country, to be granted asylum status there and send back earnings or bring his family along later. These men are taking the most dangerous routes now in the hopes of easing the journey later for their families’ (2015).

Cole (2015) has shown in relation to Eritrea that the migration of one person in one family can provide a survival line through remittances to generations of family members – it’s a question of joining the dots between economic and migration based strategies of survival; between an individual flight and a family’s ability to sustain themselves and remain alive in the region.

Many of the unmarried and childless men on the move carry weighty familial expectations. Of the young men I spoke to, many had lost a father in conflict or illness and found themselves to be the breadwinners for the remaining children in the family. Some were sent away from their families against their will and struggle to cope on their own; others decided to leave on their own, feeling that they had no alternative way to support their families. ‘I

can't tell my parents how hard it is here' says Alee, a 21-year-old Moroccan in Italy. He's speaking in broken French through tears. For Alee there is no option but to carry on. He has three siblings back at home and he is the eldest and the only one who is educated. 'My sister' he tells me, appalled, 'is twelve and she's never been educated!' He must first pay back the 3,000 Euros of debt that his family has paid to send him away before saving up to fund his sister's schooling. At first his parents tried to get him into the Moroccan military, he tells me, but they didn't have any contacts so his application was refused. He bites his nails in a boyish way as he tells me of the only job he's found so far: a car wash one and a half hours away that pays 10 Euros a day. Over the six months I know Alee his appearance undergoes a transformation. He starts and then quickly stops shaving his head and wearing his hood up. He pleads for and then ditches a second-hand pair of trendy Nike trainers. I ask him why this is and he tells me frankly that it means he looks less troublesome and is therefore less likely to be stopped by the police. 'I tell all the others as soon as they arrive to do the same', he adds. Like most men I meet, Alee is very aware of how he is perceived.

For many men then, young and older, migrating alone is a familial strategy; a way to provide for their families through remittances. The provider trope focuses in a very westernized fashion on physical contact and on the protection offered by a father to his child. It thus fails to capture the multiple virtual strategies that families employ to survive and support one another in times of war and displacement.

The Threat of the Strong Young Male

Finally, in popular imaginings of the 'refugee crisis', many fathers or other types of provider have been recast – like Alee – in Trump's model image of the threatening 'strong young

male'. The experiences of the 'strong young male' are little known, though for many he is the face of the crisis part of the 'refugee crisis'.

In many respects it is unsurprising that young men are overrepresented in recent refugee movements to Europe. We have seen above that young men are often required to provide for their families; meanwhile in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, they are at greater risk of being forced to join combat groups or to be persecuted for refusing to do so. Young men also face specifically gendered forms of persecution. Refugee rights lawyers have, for example, previously argued that 'able-bodied young Afghan males' forced into recruitment by the Taliban could constitute a 'particular social group' worthy of specific protections under the 1951 Refugee Convention (*Applicant S* discussed in Edwards 2012). Other young men, in particular from Afghanistan or Albania, are fleeing blood feuds or violence that targets them specifically as men because of a patriarchal culture that pits men against men to secure family honour. One young Pashtun who fears murder by his uncle in retaliation for a family dispute that has lasted decades tells me in an interview that he just cannot understand it – 'I wasn't even born when it kicked off! It's stupid.'

Hudson is among those who have raised the demographic alarm in relation to the arrival of such men, referring to the fact that in 2015 66.26 percent of adult migrants registered through Italy and Greece were male. In her apocalyptic portrayal of Europe invaded by migrant men she stresses that almost all terror attacks are carried out by unattached young adult men.

While there is a need for consideration of demographic trends, a fact which many states are seeking to remedy through resettlement programmes that favour women and girls (e.g. the UK and Canada), Hudson's argument seems to rely on a fragile dichotomy which sees all unmarried young male migrants as a specific 'type' of threat. 'Why would European

societies, many of which rank highest on global measures of gender equality and stability and peace, jeopardize those hard-won and enviable rankings?’ she asks, having previously referenced the Cologne sex attacks which were committed by men identified as primarily ‘north African’ against primarily ‘white’ women in Germany on New Year’s Eve 2015. The horrific attacks sparked an unprecedented backlash against new migrants and refugees on social media and in certain segments of the press across Europe. Polemicist journalist Katy Hopkins captured the hostile mood among some in Britain who saw the attacks as indicative of a wider threat. ‘Cologne is a small case study for scenarios playing out all over Europe’, she argued in a piece in the tabloid *Daily Mail* which has a daily circulation of over one and a half million (figures cited in Mail Classified 2016),

‘It is a story repeated at Calais, across Germany and into France. And in African and Arabic countries where sexual violence is the norm. White women are nothing to some Islamic and Arabic men [...] They see us as white trash. And we are no longer safe. These migrants are a cultural time-bomb, brought up in a different era, Islamic Bernard Mannings — incompatible with modern life’ (Hopkins 2016).

There is evidence that the fear that all ‘these’ strong young migrant men are potential aggressors is shared among those who identify as more liberal or sympathetic towards refugees. Helms (2015) reports, for example, that among volunteers from Austria who mobilized in support of refugees to take them from Hungary, some refused to take single men, preferring to return empty because there were no more families to transport.

Problematizing the threat of the ‘strong young male’

The clash of sexual mores between young male refugees arriving and established populations has been a popular media trope during the ‘crisis’. While much of this reporting is sensationalist and scandalizes unaccompanied male migrants *en masse*, as above, my research suggests that the issue of many young men’s differing understanding of intimate relationships is a much more complex albeit fundamentally important one.

For many young unattached men, integrating in Europe naturally poses a range of particular problems and some of these undoubtedly stem from a lack of familiarity with the gendered norms in the new country. Some of the young men I spoke to discussed childhoods growing up in polygamous families in countries including Mali, Senegal, Ghana, Gambia, Sudan and Libya. Several of them had little or no experience of intimate relationships themselves and explained that they felt that they were becoming adult in Europe. More than one teenager confessed to me that he had no knowledge of contraception methods, and there was a sense that the young men were embarrassed to discuss some of these issues with their carers or support workers for fear of being stereotyped as promiscuous. It was not uncommon during fieldwork for young male participants to ask me for relationship advice and when I responded the reaction was one of gratitude and interest. As one unaccompanied 18-year-old Muslim Sudanese man with refugee status in the UK explained to me over coffee, in his country the families ‘sort all that out – marriage and stuff’. He stressed that he was grateful for the freedom to choose a partner for himself now that he was in the UK but that time was not on his side. ‘I have a huge amount of pressure from my family back home and’, he jokes with his head in his hands ‘I have absolutely *no idea* where to start!’ The range of European

communities to offer free and in some cases obligatory sex and relationship education classes to newly arrived refugees as part of an orientation programme suggests that opportunities to discuss such issues may be becoming more widespread. While it has been suggested by some commentators that such classes primarily serve to propagate the idea that young migrant men are all potential sex offenders, they can equally be seen as a response to demand and a willingness to dialogue on the part of many men.

In parallel to them being cast as over-sexualised beings, some young migrants reported being stripped of their sexuality by those helping them. This type-casting had its own dangerous momentum. Kal*, a 17-year-old Ghanaian asylum seeker confided to me his confusion after he was taken under the wing of a well-meaning Catholic family while staying at a homelessness shelter in Italy as he awaited documentation to disprove an erroneous age assessment. The mother of the family had met him there and invited him back for dinner. Having initially dined with them once a week he was now invited every day and was even asked to stay over. The mother of the family offered for him to share the bedroom of their 15-year-old daughter. Kal, who had taken a liking to the girl was deeply confused. In the context he grew up in he would have interpreted that situation as the mother 'offering him' her daughter, he explained to me. But he'd been in Italy long enough to know there must be another meaning. Together, as we discussed age restrictions on sex in Italy along with his feelings, we realized that the misunderstanding had probably begun with the mother who saw him as a totally desexualised, vulnerable 'refugee boy'. Kal's response to the situation was to stay away from the family for a while and take comfort in his faith, learning to 'avert his gaze'. Last time I saw him he showed me a YouTube channel which has advice for men, including 'how to get over a girl'.

To turn from the subjective to the structural a final time, it is important to note that hoards of threatening ‘strong young men’ do not simply arrive in Europe as such, but are in part created by our legal and cultural structures which rigorously police the boundary between childhood and adulthood; innocence and experience for individuals like Kal. In the context of the European ‘refugee crisis’, the difference between being a man of fighting age and a victim child marks the difference between two very different realms of rights and entitlements (Chase and Allsopp 2014). As a minor you are entitled to child protection from the state; if you are over 18 you are considered to be a fully independent man which includes facing a range of challenges including destitution, detention or deportation with little or no support. Age assessments – which may include wrist measuring, dental X-rays, genital examination and psycho-social exams – are used during the reception of refugees to, quite literally, sort the boys from the men. This process was frequently reported to me as being deeply humiliating. Kal, wrongly age assessed originally as 25 years of age, commented, ‘I was just like what on earth is this? I thought this country was meant to be civilized. It was mostly the black guys’, he continued, ‘the Arab boys got through’. He was not the only man to talk to me of the racialized assumptions they faced as migrant men. Driss* was surprised at how local volunteers responded to him as a young black man. He explained that he feels pressure to ‘perform’ for the volunteers. ‘If I don’t smile they think I’m shifty’, he remarks, ‘but I don’t want to smile!... I’m going through so, so, so much’. The next time I see Driss a bubbly female student volunteer runs up to him and hugs him tightly before commenting, ‘Oh my god, you’re still not smiling!’ He gives me a shrug. There is not sufficient space in the scope of this Chapter to discuss in detail the racialised discourses around migrant masculinity that arise in my research, though it should be noted that this is an important area that requires much greater attention (Edwards 2006: 63; Hubbard 2005).

Young men carry this stereotyping heavily and with significant awareness, adapting their coping strategies accordingly. Underage migrants often spoke to me during my research of the dread of turning 18 or ‘ageing out’ and being cast off into the street to cope alone. One social worker in Italy told me what he saw as the ‘quintessential story’ of this transition: ‘you have a young man I’m working with who asked me for boxing lessons so that he could prepare for turning 18 and for life on the street. He’s got a month before he turns 18 and is “toughening up”, trying to work out and make himself bigger and even practice getting into fights, preparing himself for life outside the train stations’. Preparing them for this transition, another social worker tells me, requires ‘tough love’ on the part of the carers. In other words, both the recipient and the giver of the care must lead by example by exhibiting traits that are characteristically male. This model of resilience is inherently ironic: to survive, the young men feel that they must internalise and enact traits of the ‘strong young male’ stereotype; it is this stereotype that governs the very care system that they feel has failed them as it casts them out at the age of 18.

The example suggests that the polarised stereotypes around young migrants and refugee men as either hyper-sexualised youths or kids without agency may be standing in the way of a frank discussion of important gender issues. This binary portrait of masculinity is in many ways reinforced by the institutional mechanisms including the age assessment process during the reception system.

Conclusion

This Chapter has shown that many of the complexities of masculinity are pulled to the surface in migration and refugee movements. In the testimonies emerging from refugees who

have fled to Europe we can observe the crumbling of the bipolarization between the threatening soldier and the woman victim. Men's accounts frequently betray a vulnerability which challenges not just subjective ideas of manhood and strength, but also reveals the fallibility of the militarised nation state system in which it has been argued that masculinity finds its most violent manifestation. We have seen how in the European 'refugee crisis', the traditional figure of militarised masculinity is set against the figures of the man as provider and the promiscuous and unruly young male. I have sought to problematise these norms in light of evidence emerging from fieldwork in two cities in Europe during the largest arrival of refugees and migrants in recent history. A detailed analysis of common tropes about male refugees shows how complex and often contradictory the reality can be. We have seen that the tropes are fluid and intersectional: at once subjective and structural. They are traceable to the social constructs that migrants face upon arrival in Europe as well as being authored by or belonging to the migrant men. Alongside further exploration of men's lived experiences of displacement, it is therefore crucial to better understand the often intentional and agentic conditions under which tropes of refugeehood and masculinity, new and old, are forged and propagated. More research is needed to explore the gender differences in refugee flows; understanding men's experiences and the forms of identity that at one fuel and sustain their journeys must be part of this. Viewed together, the evidence calls for a more intersectional approach to refugee masculinities which recognises the gender specific displacement experiences of boys and men and acknowledges that men cannot be cast as either victims or soldiers: they can be at once vulnerable and agentic too.

**All names have been altered to protect the anonymity of research participants.*

Paper Four: ‘The Story is in the Telling’: Thematic Narratives, Time and Truth in the Life Projects of Unaccompanied Young Migrants and Refugees

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Proposed journal: *Ethnography*

Abstract

This article argues that narrative is important to understanding the life projects of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees, their capabilities and vulnerabilities, as well as how they understand themselves in relation to society and how likely they are to interact (or not) with the support structures within it. Five main narrative genres are discussed that were commonly encountered in mixed-methods ethnographic fieldwork with over 100 young people in England and Italy: (i) tragedy, (ii) epic, (iii) comedy, (iv) confession and (v) fantasy. The article interrogates the value of ‘truth’ in these narratives and concludes that storytelling is fundamentally linked to the sense of ontological security demonstrated by prior scholarship to be vital to the subjective wellbeing of these young people.

Introduction

I am in a pizzeria with Kal, aged 17, and he is narrating his journey from Ghana to Italy. ‘I am the black Ulysses’, he quips. I am not surprised by his cultural reference to the ancient Greek epic, *The Odyssey*. Kal is well-educated and we have just been discussing the novels of the Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe, which we studied at our respective schools. ‘We don’t really study colonialism in England’, I remark. I am reminded of an observation by Mitchell (1998:55) that is cited in Hyndman (2001:264):

‘To understand the field one has to engage with it and the people who populate it at a primordial level, where common language and shared cultural capital avoid acts of self-displacement and the framing of the world-as-exhibition.’

‘I love African literature’, Kal asserts, and I agree. Yes, this is *cultural capital* that we share. Trust is being built. I am not the nightmare ethnographer who ‘comes and makes a slow, fake song of the mouth’s eager devastation’ (Laurie Moore, cited in Jackson 2013: 40).

My interview topic guide is momentarily abandoned, for Kal’s narrative has gathered its own momentum. He has been given a platform and he is off, with an élan that I had not anticipated. He starts rapping, much to the curiosity of other customers in the pizzeria:

‘Why ‘em underrate da black? [...]

They try to stop me but dey can’t stop me now.

‘Cos God always bless me now.

No matter what we are rising,

We gonna rise out of the ghetto.

They vampire, hot like fire,

But I'm burnin' higher...'

I invited Kal to take part in a semi-structured interview but, like most participants, after answering some standard questions he begins to narrate the challenges and dreams of his life in – and on – his own terms. Although the elaboration of a personal 'life project plan' with a social care professional should provide the basis for the formal support given to all unaccompanied minors across EU Member States (Chase and Allsopp 2014), I found that these were either not applied, or that participants fell outside any formal reception system. This was due to a deliberate evasion of institutional control by the young people themselves (Allsopp et al. 2015; Allsopp and Chase 2017), or – as was the case with Kal – because they had been wrongly age assessed by the authorities. Over the course of 18 months of fieldwork in England and Italy, several young people explained that I was the first person in Europe to ask them about their hopes and dreams.

Background

I recognize the seriousness of my enterprise in researching the life projects of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees. At the time of my research (2015-2016), Europe was facing unprecedented mixed migration flows and the topic was – and remains – a political hot potato. 'Fieldwork', as Hydnman (2011:262) remarks, 'is at once a political, personal, and professional undertaking'; alongside the pursuit of rigour, upholding a sense of our mutual humanity and a commitment to a just truth, where possible, is key (Kuntz 2016).

Because of the importance of the asylum interview as a means to access refugee protection (Ordóñez 2008), asylum seekers often approach researchers with caution; likewise, researchers may be sceptical about the stories narrated by refugees. Their narratives are commonly shaped by rehearsed legalistic account of past persecution. They may also be shaped by ‘fragments’ (Besteman 2014) or collective traumas inflicted on whole communities (Malkki 1995). Alternatively, participants may be fearful and therefore loth to speak. This research actively sought to overcome these limitations by employing a longitudinal approach and using a range of artistic participatory methods alongside semi-structured interviews.

In the context of a strict and disciplinary asylum and welfare regime in which access to certain entitlements is dependent on the performance of certain identity traits (which commonly include, for children, vulnerability – Bhabha 2008), the research interviews and workshops conducted for this research provided a rare space for participants to critically reflect on and creatively re-imagine their futures and what they had learned in relation to their past experiences – to enact, in other words, a sense of ‘ontological security’ (Giddens 1991). This has been demonstrated in past research to be important to the subjective wellbeing of this group. As Chase has argued, ontological security ‘addresses young people’s existential need for a sense of a projected self beyond the here and now. [...] a life plan and envisaging a trajectory into the future.’ (2013: 860). This article builds on this work by arguing that biographical narrative is a central but as yet under-theorised part of this component of wellbeing.

This research suggests that the life projects of unaccompanied minors and young refugee men—and the implications of these for their subjective wellbeing and support needs – are as much in the telling as in the tale. We need, in other words, to listen to how young people speak, as well as to what they say. The thematic genres of (i) tragedy, (ii) epic, (iii) comedy (iv) confession and (iv) fantasy are identified here as central to young people’s narratives of self as they seek to move forward in difficult circumstances. These thematic genres were derived from my analysis of the stories. Indeed, how young people situate themselves in relation to these genres reveals much about their capabilities (Chase 2018, forthcoming) and vulnerabilities, as well as how they understand their position in relation to society and their ability or willingness to access various sources of support within it. It therefore has fundamental policy implications.

I examine narrative genres as they featured in the life projects narrated to me by 58 unaccompanied young migrants and refugees in England and Italy between 2015 and 2016. I also interrogate the value of ‘truth’ as a defining feature of these narratives. I conclude that greater focus on the existential and epistemological aspects of storytelling is imperative for practitioners and researchers working with young migrants and refugees: the type of narrative told, and the opportunity to tell stories, are fundamentally linked to the sense of ontological security demonstrated by prior scholarship to be so vital to the subjective wellbeing of individuals in this group (Chase 2013a, 2013b).

Methodology

I spent 18 months conducting field research, based in two cities, one in Italy and one in England. My primary aim was to explore the life projects of unaccompanied young

migrants and refugees and, in particular, whether and how the young people interacted with and understood statutory and non-statutory forms of welfare and the oft-related immigration control apparatuses (Carrera et al. 2016, 2018b) as they pursued these. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 58 unaccompanied young men aged 16-26 regarding their wellbeing and experiences in relation to welfare provision in Europe. I also spent time as a participant observer based in three support centres (two in Italy, one in England), during which I kept detailed ethnographic field notes of my encounters with hundreds of additional young people (some meetings were also interviewees). In each setting, I was also involved in collaborative arts-based activities which gave participants various media through which to tell stories. These workshops elicited accounts of young people's lives which (always with their permission) I documented. They included visual arts workshops; museum visits and the creation of 'museums of self' in which participants placed objects of importance to their own lives; and music and poetry. Two art exhibitions with accompanying booklets were developed with partner organisations. All research was conducted in English, Italian and French, in all of which I, the researcher, am fluent, with assistance from Arabic, Amharic and Tigrinya interpreters. All translations are my own.

Differences in country of origin between the two field sites are broadly reflective of national trends which are shaped by the respective opportunities for asylum and informal and formal work and different kinds of welfare support over time. I refer to this dynamic elsewhere as 'English iron rod' versus 'Italian colander welfare' (see paper two of this thesis). Participants had mixed motives for migrating. These included safety, work, education and family reunification/private life (Allsopp and Chase 2017).

Ethical clearance was received from the host University and ethical considerations were addressed throughout. Participants were selected through a mix of referrals from gatekeepers and support centres and snowball sampling. As advised by Schiltz and Büscher (2018) in this journal, the respective power and position of each ‘broker’ was taken into consideration in the conduct of the research and its analysis.

My analysis is informed by a social constructivist approach to research. This approach sees the collection and analysis of data – especially as this relates to storytelling – as an inherently inter-relational co-construction of knowledge, at the centre of which are two persons in a meeting of minds through the act of speaking and listening. As we will see, the researcher’s role as listener is far from neutral.

I sought to diversify my sample by including individuals with different pathways through, and experiences of, the English and Italian reception and welfare systems (including those outside it). I focused on male participants because of the predominance of men in mixed migration movements to Europe and as part of a broader interest in constructions of masculinity in migration (Allsopp 2017a).

Narrative analysis of interview transcripts, coupled with ethnographic field notes from the arts workshops, provide this article’s source material. It is always difficult in an ethnography to decide where evidence begins and ends. I adopted a flexible text-based narrative approach which focused on young people’s understandings of visual or other materials. I followed Bagnoli (2009) and others in analysing the images and texts in terms of the stories that were told, giving weight to both the internal (content) and external (contextual) aspects of the narratives (Banks 2008). In doing so, I pursued what

Drew and Guillemin (2014) call the ‘Interpretative Engagement Framework’ which involves a three-stage process of: 1. participant engagement; 2. researcher-driven engagement; and 3. re-contextualising. The latter stage involved continually feeding back findings to participants. To avoid privileging the most ‘stimulating’ narratives, and to correct for subjective bias, I conducted a dual strategy of thematic coding and narrative analysis.

This article analyses the narratives I was told by my respondents, and I treat them as such – as expressing deep emotional realities, even if they are not close to factual truth, and even if they are liable at times to lapse into delusion and self-delusion. It must, of course, be questioned whether the genres I describe are features of the narratives themselves, or whether they describe my own response to these. Would another researcher presented with the same stories reach the same conclusions as I did, and divide the narratives into the same thematic types? The reality is, probably not exactly. Nevertheless, I have sought to stick broadly to traditional narrative genres. Definitions are given below in Table A, along with the frequency with which I identified them across the 58 interviews. The full data tables are included in the Appendix E. My identification of the narrative genre was based in its consistent use, over a period ranging between two minutes and the whole interview, to tell a story – often a story within a story, for narratives frequently combined different genres of narration, or these genres alternated across them.

My interpretation of the life project narratives is shaped by my position as a young white British female academic, educated in a primarily (though not exclusively) western cultural and narrative tradition. With colleagues and participants, I sought to challenge this bias by exploring the prominent migratory narratives in cultural media consumed in countries of

origin. This research is discussed elsewhere (see e.g. Allsopp et al. 2018; Abbassi and Monsutti 2017). I also discussed the five narrative categories with participants after the research to check whether they resonated, which they largely did.

Table 3: Classification of Interviews by Narrative Genres

Narrative Genre	Definition employed in Research	No. of cases in semi-structured interviews (total no.=58)
Tragedy	Despite their courage, the protagonist is faced with a range of challenges and their plans are thwarted by forces outside their control (e.g. deception, misunderstanding)	34
Comedy	The protagonist's story is characterized by one or a series of humorous events or encounters which serve to destabilize the status quo and (sometimes) to assert power in the face of authority or celebrate the triumph of individual agency over adversity.	17
Epic	The protagonist is a hero (of sorts), pursuing something more than self-interest and, at least sometimes, seeing their efforts crowned by success.	15
Confession	The protagonist reveals some secrets about themselves or aspects of their identity that are usually hidden, often accompanied with an element of shame and/or catharsis.	15
Fantasy	The protagonist has a hope or dream which motivates them to act out a series of events in order to try to achieve it.	32

Findings

I now present some general observations based on the interview data, before examining these in more detail alongside the data from my participatory observation.

Although my interview sample is not representative, certain factors, including time in the country and security of immigration status, appear to shape the type of narrative genre employed (I give this information in Appendix E). The degree of rapport that I had with each respondent also inevitably shaped the story was told. By triangulating the quantitative findings given in the table in Appendix E in the context of my broader ethnographic research, some additional trends emerge.

The role of epic (used in 15 out of 58 interviews) in the life project narratives of participants can be understood as a bridge between tragedy and fantasy. The epic was generally the privileged tongue of those who had 'succeeded' in some way - for example, got their papers, secured a job and accumulated material resources. The narrator of the epic is one with a certain 'status' (in both senses of the word); one who has a platform in society to speak, or, in rare cases, who seizes it.

The epic, for example, which featured in 15 of 58 interviews, is employed more by those with secure legal status who have spent longer in Europe, where they have had more time to develop a greater sense of ontological security (and perhaps had more opportunities for 'voice'). There are nevertheless some anomalies in relation to this general observation, discussed below, such as Kal (with whose rap this article began). In his use of the epic, he

appears rather to be performing a certain kind of confident and defiant masculinity associated with the musical genres of rap and hip hop.

Kal's story is one interesting example of a character-based exception to these general observations. He consistently spoke in the epic register across a three-part interview over time, as circumstances in his life drastically changed. His use of genre appeared to be shaped by his significant education and wide reading, as well as by his engagement in a range of storytelling-based endeavours, such as a music group.

The tragedy genre, meanwhile, which was employed by 34 out of 58 participants, was more common among those newly arrived or with insecure legal status. Fantasy, used by 28 out of 32 participants, was often used by the relatively recently arrived who had yet to endure the frustration of waiting. Importantly, as seen in the Appendix tables, most narratives were hybrids.

Comedy was used surprisingly frequently as a coping strategy among participants (and indeed by me as the author – see limitations section of this thesis) and a way of challenging power imbalances and reaching out.

The prevalence of tragedy and fantasy is unsurprising given the group under examination. The significance of comedy and confession, however, is more novel. Used by 17 out of 58 and 15 out of 58 respondents respectively, comedy and confession were generally reserved for incidents when deep trust was established between the participant and myself. Their use was also shaped by the individual's character, their mental state (e.g. angry/sad), and how much they felt they had to lose or gain in telling a certain type of story. It is probable

that I encountered more confessional narratives in Italy relative to my native England because of my role as an 'outsider'. At the time of this research, the Italian welfare and asylum system was also less stringent (see Allsopp, forthcoming); so there was less of a risk in confessing the fact of having 'lied', for example.

Participants' narratives changed over time in relation to past and future events. Indeed, they were generally aware of and spoke to the constructed and circumstantial nature of their life projects and how these changed over space and time. As Atik, aged 17, from Afghanistan, commented, for example, 'When I'm 18 I will have many problems. I think about it. [but] I don't cry now like when I arrived'.

Tragedy

Unsurprisingly perhaps, the most common genre to feature in the young people's narratives was tragedy. A tragic event commonly inspired their initial flight and these events were often gendered. They commonly included the outbreak of violence in the region and loss of home; coming of age in relation to forced recruitment by the army or a militia (e.g. in Eritrea or Afghanistan); and/or the sudden loss of a family member. Several young men were forced to flee, for example, after the death of their father; in a gendered intergenerational shift, it was now their responsibility to ensure the safety and livelihood of the family. This was experienced as a challenge of epic proportions that required strategies of mobility and sending remittances home.

The tragic catalyst could be individual (e.g. in the case of Lee, 17, who was persecuted on the grounds of his sexuality in Gambia), or collective (e.g. in the case of Saad, 18, who situated

his flight from Egypt as part of a wider response to the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) on the African Continent). The ways in which young people would shift in some cases between individual and collective narratives is at odds with an asylum system that seeks to individuate them and isolate their case for protection from the wider context. Some participants identified this tension, pointing out for example that friends who had the same story as they did had been believed and received asylum, whereas they, who had the ‘same story’, had unjustly been found to be unreliable and had accordingly been refused.

Other tragic narratives were more intimate, Lika, a 17-year-old Albanian who was living at one of the centres where I conducted my fieldwork in Italy, painted multiple sunsets in the art workshops, always depicting, at the centre, a couple cuddling. This repeated motif, he explained, marked the loss of his girlfriend, who had stayed in Albania, and his loneliness and desire to see her again.

While loss was often associated with the past, in discussing their life projects and dreams, loss was also associated with lost opportunities for the future. For several participants who were struggling to secure legal papers, this loss was the hope of a better life in Europe. In a pencil sketch, Mesr, 16 from Egypt, depicted this dream in the form of two people speaking on the phone, with a boat between them. He wrote:

‘It’s me and my cousin. He’s in Italy and I’m in Egypt and we’re talking on the phone. I’m asking him ‘so how’s Italy?’ And he says ‘Oh it’s great, yeah. There’s work, money, there’s all you could ever want! You have to come to Italy!’ And then I come to Italy and it’s not like that...’

He called the picture ‘The Illusion of Italy’. Mesr was deeply frustrated by his inability to secure documents due to bureaucratic delays. He felt betrayed by his cousin but, because of shame, he also felt unable to articulate his misery to his family back home. He felt that he was living a ‘double life’. A survivor of sexual exploitation, he was frustrated by the fact that he had to keep repeating the story of what had happened to him to a range of institutional actors in order to access a minimum level of support. He was glad, he told me, that I was interested in hearing different kinds of stories about him and his plans – or rather lost opportunities for the future – rather than focusing on his past; like the Palestinian youth interviewed by Chatty (2009), he did not want to be reduced to his institutional label as a ‘survivor’ or a ‘refugee’. There is always another story.

Research has documented how refugees must often act as helpless and vulnerable in order to qualify for aid (Harrell-Bond 1986). In other words, tragedy is the established narrative that the institutional system wants to hear – the means to access the cherished ‘prize’ of refugee status (Zetter 2007). In a development of the social policy ‘welfare for work’ logic, there is nevertheless evidence that this institutional narrative is changing to foster a neoliberal mindset in which refugees must prove themselves worthy economic actors to qualify for certain protection opportunities (Betts and Collier 2017; Ruhs 2013). The status of ‘child’ nevertheless remains prized among people on the move as a pathway to certain welfare entitlements that are denied to adults (Allsopp et al. 2015).

Participants who framed their life project story as a tragedy sometimes experienced the interview as a moment of catharsis. In recounting situations of adversity that they had survived, they imbued them with new meaning. Often, as is common in both eastern and western cultural traditions, in these narratives God was framed as the arbiter of fortune.

Giani, 18, from Egypt, explained that over the course of the week that he had spent crowded on a boat with 200 other refugees coming to Italy, several people tragically died. The corpse of a 13-year-old boy was thrown overboard to make more space. ‘God curse that boat that brought me here to Italy, truly’, he exclaimed as he recounted this event. ‘God strike it down that it brought me here!’

Three research participants explained that because of the tragedy that they had endured they had given up religion, while several others had instead ‘leant into’ it. The importance of religion for coping among this group has been documented (Raghallaigh 2011).

At other times, it was the Herculean struggle to learn English or understand the asylum and welfare system that was the omnipotent force that held their lives in limbo. Some respondents who had fought repeatedly against ‘the system’ and lost, thwarted by the politics of ageing and time (Allsopp et al. 2015), pursued strategies of immobility or paralysis. As part of my fieldwork, I visited a group of 18-year-olds who had been refused asylum in England in a house that they were sharing. They slept all day and hardly ate, having lost all sense of ontological security and meaning to carry their story forward, either literally or metaphorically. The curtains were continually closed and one young Afghan told me that when he looked at the clock he did not know if it was ‘day or night’. Their tragic nemesis responsible for the hero’s downfall was sometimes framed as an individual (e.g. a negligent social worker), or sometimes the international border regime as a whole.

In his story, Bilal, 22 from Afghanistan, distinguished carefully between individual bureaucrats (whom he often experienced as kind) and the corrupt politicians and ‘international order’, which he saw as responsible for the tragedy in his life. Bilal arrived in

England aged 16 after a year of travelling, having fled Afghanistan aged 15, fearing forced recruitment into the Taliban. Once settled he fell in love with Karima, a fellow minor in care, and they dated for over three years. Bilal's promising future was curtailed when he turned 18, as it is for many others in his position, when he was refused asylum, detained and deported. He experienced this as deeply unjust, especially because he felt that he had contributed much to UK society and had always been 'truthful'. The event shook his understanding of everything; it was 'like a dream'. This dreamlike quality appeared across several of the young people's narratives.

Without family and fearing for his life, Bilal left Afghanistan for Dubai, returning only briefly to Afghanistan, whence he set off back to Europe – specifically to the city from which he had previously been deported. It was here that I interviewed Bilal. He had cheated time, successfully returning through irregular means two years later to the place he now considered home. But his second journey to Europe, as he recounted it, was more tragic than epic: it had included multiple deportations from Iran back to Afghanistan, and gruelling periods of labour in Turkey and Bulgaria to pay his way. If Kal was the 'black Ulysses', Bilal appeared to me to be the South Asian Sisyphus, bearing the weight of passing time in the face of an impossibly bounded border regime.

Asked what his primary motivation for remigration was, Bilal gave an answer that stood out from the fear and economic insecurity that past research has shown fuel the remigration of many deported Afghan youth (Schuster and Majidi 2015): love. The fantasy of being reunited with Karima made it possible for him to ensure the hardships of multiple displacement and remigration. He could frame himself as the hero of his own love story and maintain a sense of purpose.

Despite the power of the story in and of itself as a coping strategy for Bilal, his homecoming had been mixed materially and emotionally. For, after his perilous second odyssey, Bilal had not returned triumphant but rather destitute, to find his love surrounded by new suitors. While Bilal struggled abroad to stay afloat, motivated by the prospect of a reunion, Karima had received documents and moved on. As in many tragedies, Bilal had been thwarted by time. Karima had a new boyfriend and was pregnant with her second child.

At the time of our interview, Bilal was seeking to lodge a fresh asylum claim and reliant on volunteers to survive. 'For now there's no one else except God', he said ... 'I'm not sure what will happen this time because if this time they send me back I will go crazy; I will go mad. I'm only 22, I look like 40.'

Several features of Bilal's tale are tragic – the evocation of madness, the trouble with time, the duplicity and the frailty of love.

Comedy

While stories such as Bilal's challenge pre-conceived ideas of 'unaccompanied' young refugees by drawing attention to their oft-ignored emotional and relational lives (Allsopp 2017a), another unexpected finding was how much time participants spent laughing, even when facing the most tragic of events.

At times, I understood the use of comic narratives (used in 17 out of 58 interviews) as an attempt to process trauma, or to reach out to other people, including myself as researcher.

Sometimes laughter was used to conceal pain. I observed this dynamic at the English support centre, when a couple of the group's 'clowns' became more serious and fatalistic during one-to-one interviews.

The comic is always an attempt to connect somehow, and laughter can be a great social leveller (Jackson 2013, Knott 2014). Joking relationships, Jackson rightly notes, are commonly 'strategies for managing social situations in which two categories of persons find themselves related in mutually contradictory ways – simultaneously dissociated and associated' (2013: 176-177). The comic, in this sense, catches the researcher and 'the researched' on what Jackson calls 'the cusp of identification' (181).

As I transcribed my interviews, I was shocked at how many contained long passages marked [muffled laughter] or [interrupted by laughter]. The range of topics into which humour was injected as anesthesia was unbounded: the Afghan who lost his eye during a military exercise after finding employment with the British army ('I mean, how unlucky is that! He fled the Taliban only to... [laughter from participant]'); girl troubles ('yeah, if you go to the gym you'll always see refugees, as we have to be that bit hotter to compensate for being bloody refugees!...' [laughter from participant and interviewer]); the difficulties of British queuing ('and this lady was like "get back in the queue" - like I *killed someone* man, and I didn't even know what a queue was! I was just hungry!...' [laughter from participant and interviewer]...). Sometimes the comedy was narrated via the body, as slapstick. Several participants gesticulated widely and laughed, for example, as they demonstrated how they had climbed into a truck, or clasped the bottom of a lorry, in order to mimic their physical (and mental) discomfort during parts of their journey.

The butt of jokes varied, but the laughter expressed was often bitter or angry. Figures of power in their lives who were dethroned through comic narratives included the unsuspecting lorry driver who took for granted his power to cross borders and ended up with a smuggling fine; and the social worker with the power to decide young people's biological age, who was reduced to an old witch herself, having been thwarted by the very process of ageing. Other subjects of humour were border guards, volunteers and, of course, me as the researcher. Refugees would often wind up the Italian volunteers with jokes about the mafia, for example, reversing the hegemonic narrative that they were the 'corrupting' social influence. Grand narratives were also challenged by jokes shared between young people. Dil, 24 from Afghanistan, whom I got to know through my fieldwork in England, mocked not just individuals but the whole idea of the supremacy of developed nations and the rule-of-law with a series of jokes about western versus eastern civilization. In one joke, American astronaut Neil Armstrong is surprised upon arriving on the moon to see a group of Afghans huddled around a fire with their tattered flag on display. 'What the Hell?' questions Armstrong, astounded that even after the USA has put huge financial investment into this effort, these individuals from a 'poor country' have managed to get there first through sheer determination. 'Well what did you expect', responds one of the Afghan 'Moon refugees', 'of course we got here first, we took the illegal route!' The joke is comic; but it also celebrates the refugee journey as a narrative epic – a success for the underdog.

Comedy can force participation physiologically in the form of laughter, just as tragedy can provoke the physiological reaction of tears. The response renders us momentarily exposed and reminds us of our sameness and mutual vulnerability (Knott 2014). The comic stretches the borders of 'the field' across space and time, so that power is apparent and rendered momentarily visible and open to tinkering or transformation.

An example of this use of comedy to unsettle and disturb power relations and assert common humanity occurred during a field visit to the beach. I was driving a car full of young people and it was a beautiful day; the music was blaring. The first quip of the day was from Dil: ‘how much worse is your driving than the traffickers in the Libyan desert, man! Wow! Careful, I don’t want to lose my life now’. At the beach, I remembered that I had a dinghy in the boot. Out it came and it was soon inflated by the group of Afghans and Albanians. ‘Even in Libya I didn’t have to blow up my own boat’, quipped Tig, aged 24, from Afghanistan, to raucous laughter from his fellow refugee boat survivors; and to more awkward ‘oh, *ha has*’ from myself and my fellow ‘outsider’ research colleagues. ‘I actually did have to blow up my own boat!’ remarked one of the others. They started chatting in Pushtun about their respective journeys – a connection had been made.

There followed an afternoon of boating off the Cornish coast. Jokes followed about the precarious sea conditions as the young people swapped stories about their sea voyages to Europe and their sense of fear and adventure. The comic in such a context is, as Jackson explains, ‘not the opposite of the tragic so much as a strategy for countermanding the tragic with distance and indirection’ (2013:182-183). ‘Comedy’, he continues, ‘opens up the possibility of subverting the original event by replaying it in such dramatically altered and exaggerated form that it is experienced as “other”’. The shared component of the laughter is also essential in understanding the laughter’s narrative function – in terms of both forging bonds between those who have been through similar experiences and bringing in, through a collective act of empathy, those – like myself as researcher – who have not.

Epic

The epic differs from the tragic and the comic in that the protagonist is neither a victim nor a survivor but a hero (of sorts) pursuing something more than self-interest and, at least sometimes, seeing their efforts crowned by success (like the Afghan Moon Refugees). The epic accommodates the collective dimension of many young migrants' life projects, linked as they are to family or communal aspirations and livelihood strategies (Allsopp and Chase 2016).

One might expect the epic narrative genre to be ubiquitous in the life projects of this group. However, I found that, at least in the ways in which participants narrated their life projects to me, the epic was rarely used, and employed mainly by those maintaining a more confident or defiant identity in the face of a hostile society. Indeed, it appeared in a sustained way in only 15 out of the 58 interviews.

Most commonly, epic narrators in the research had the security of legal status and/or employment and thus spoke from a place of relative pride and security. For others, such as Kal, our 'black Ulysses', the use of the epic was shaped more by character and by the level of trust between him and me. For Kal, recounting his life project as an epic allowed him to celebrate certain interpersonal capital and capabilities which he had demonstrated before adversity; he could assert meaning and agency over past events, even from a situation of powerlessness in the present. Although Kal had hardly received a hero's welcome in Italy, for him there was glory in the fact of even having survived the hellish voyage: 'hot like fire, risin' higher out of the ghetto'.

Like a classical 'hero', Kal used trickery to defy his future fate as a street seller in Gambia after being cast out of his family home. In the rap presented at the start of this article, he

frames himself as the Greek hero Prometheus who used his cunning to steal fire from the Gods to illuminate humanity with a greater wisdom. For Kal, this greater wisdom equated to a postcolonial world without borders in which opportunities were more equal. Several of the respondents' life projects were equally political. In certain narratives, their migrations were framed as part of post-colonial reparations for past injustice and as fantasies on an epic scale, for example, as part of a movement towards a world with no borders.

Participants seemed to enjoy performing epic tales. Sometimes they embellished events. There were sharks in the Mediterranean, for example, or crocodiles. At other times, the epic appeared in the form of lists of the countries travelled and sights seen: Tim, 17 from Eritrea, ran out of fingers as he recounted the many countries through which he had travelled; meanwhile, another Eritrean recounted how on his epic voyage he had watched the stars in perfect blackness at sea for weeks, and lived to see the Eiffel Tower *and* the Colosseum! – *had I seen such things?* he inquired.

Afghan participants had a particular penchant for recounting epic stories. This may have been because they were more likely to have secure immigration status. As noted above, there was a correlation between security of legal status and narration of the epic, as well as between security of legal status and an apparent feeling of relaxation and enjoyment in the act of storytelling. There may be a cultural component to this storytelling, as discussed elsewhere (Sierakowska-Dyndo J 2014; Abbassi and Monsutti 2017).

Confession

Following religious and cultural traditions, confession is a chance to come clean about one's sins or mistakes. For this group, it is a rare opportunity to 'tell the truth' about certain facets of one's identity about which one was required to be silent so as to conform with – and to progress along – a certain narrative arch necessary to access certain rights and entitlements in the welfare and asylum system (Allsopp, forthcoming). One 16-year-old in Italy, for example, refused to disclose that he had an uncle in the city, for fear he would be forced to move in with him. Silence has been identified as a coping strategy among unaccompanied minors (Kohli 2005): not just what they say, but what they choose *not* to say, can have a significant bearing on their asylum claims and life trajectories.

Many respondents were exhausted by constantly having to perform the role of the 'deserving' migrant and underplay their capabilities. Some felt that they had to hide facets of their characters which they liked, and which were commonly linked to ideas of strong masculinity. This included, for example, physical strength and *savoir faire* (Allsopp 2017). Performances of vulnerability were necessary in order for them to qualify as 'deserving' for services, but these were burdensome.

The research encounter offered participants a degree of protection to 'confess' as part of their story. Often the lies that people recounted had been told as a means of helping others, or because young people had 'no choice'. They were usually easily explicable, and yet they caused great moral anguish to participants. The following incidents featured in multiple confessional narratives: lying to parents about leaving; using deception to obtain the means to travel; the act of illegally crossing borders; the use of violence (often in self-defence, but sometimes in anger, shame and frustration); leaving other people behind; and the act of stealing (e.g. food) in order to survive.

Telling the truth or ‘confessing’ in this context could be interpreted as an act of defiance or *parrêsia*. Parrêsia is classical concept that has been interpreted by Foucault, among others, as a proud and defiant subject speaking truth to power ([1978]2016). However, it was rare for respondents to frame their confession as part of a moral crusade. Certain confessional narratives by Kal could be interpreted as *parrêsia*, especially because he was so keen to participate in the research as a way of helping others. In telling me that he had been involved in an internet scam to get the money to leave, for example, he felt it necessary to explain that even though he knew it was ‘not right’, he felt that his situation of poverty and the general lack of opportunities for him in his home context that were borne from global inequality had made it inevitable. Confronting risk to oneself or others is nevertheless a condition of *parrêsia*, and because of research anonymity and the degree of trust between us, the risk taken by Kal in speaking to me was arguably relatively small. ‘Coming clean’ for him was, rather, a way to subjectively overcome the ‘shame’ of being compelled to lie by structural constraints. Elsewhere I have argued, following the argument made by Woolf and De Shalit (2007), that not being forced to lie as a means of accessing basic entitlements should be a fundamental right (Allsopp, forthcoming).

Several young people confessed to feeling survivor’s guilt. Most had seen someone die or seriously injured en route to Europe, including loved ones. Without having the spaces to disclose these experiences safely and without fear of reprisals (implication in criminal investigations, for example), participants often reported having nightmares or trouble sleeping. Italian writer and chemist Primo Levi is famous for documenting the horrors he witnessed in exile in Auschwitz concentration camp. If, as he notes (1986), even the act of transmitting ‘a piece of gossip’ is an act of ‘obeying nature’ which ‘satisfies a primary need’,

being able to talk about events of such magnitude is surely, for these young people, imperative.

Although some participants were quite defiant in speaking ‘truth to power’, most were more subdued. Here, the confessional interview felt more like a disciplinary act than a liberating gesture – a form of control which is internalized by the subject, even when outside the field of vision of power. For the power agenda of ‘the confessional discourse’, as Gabriel has argued (2004: 27), ‘is not merely the humiliation or purification of the subject, but the definition of a domain of experience as a domain of surveillance and control’. In the research encounter, it follows that I also represented the Europe that they had ‘cheated’. I therefore gave the chance to offer a form of salvation. The question of the interview as a confession is bound up with questions of truth and trust in research ethics (Carey 2018). As Griffiths (2012) has explored, male refugees in particular are often acutely aware of the ways in which they are portrayed ‘as vile liars and truth distorters’ in popular narratives.

Joseph’s ‘confession’ demonstrates the complex interaction of lying, truth and guilt and how these were manifested differently over space and time in certain young people’s narratives. Joseph, from Gambia, was registered as aged 19 at the time of our interview and staying in an adult hostel in a large Italian city. He had been in the country for over a year and obtained a two-year humanitarian leave document.

As he told me about himself and his aspirations, at several points, Joseph shifted positions between that of a persecuted adult refugee – the ‘official narrative’ that he had given to the institution – and that of a child labour migrant. He seemed at first to be uncomfortable with,

and then to enjoy, playing with the truth. ‘Why does it matter?’ he asked. I was also aware that he was testing me. Was I a reliable source to whom he could entrust his stories?

After about an hour, Joseph changed stories entirely, telling me that everything he had told me so far was false: he was in fact 17, and had migrated not to flee persecution but for economic reasons and ‘the fun of it’. He went on to explain that he had changed his age several times in the Italian asylum bureaucracy so as to obtain access to better accommodation and material resources and avoid destitution. Finally, he ‘chose’ to be an adult, as it gave him the freedom to work at night to pay off his debt of voyage – something that he was not allowed to do as a ‘child’.

‘Frankly’, Joseph concluded his confession, ‘in Europe, if you want to be honest to get the document, you won’t get it ... I was on this journey. I lied a lot. I lied lied lied lied lied lied lied until I reached here. I had to lie to survive’.

Joseph’s story troubled me and I was ‘selective’ in the truths I took from our interview (Carey 2018). I had felt, transferred to me, some of the burden of holding his ‘confession’. After discussions with colleagues, I concluded, for example, that ethically it was not my place to intervene and report his age to the adult centre. But the question remains: what are your ethical obligations as a listener when your participant gives you multiple narratives (Carey 2018; Jackson 2013), or tells you a story that you have not asked to hear?

It was clear that for Joseph, as for others, having someone to *listen* to his narrative construct of self was fundamental to his wellbeing and ability to craft a sense of ontological security. When

I saw him days after our initial interview he seemed to be a different person, cheerful and ‘feeling lighter’, he said.

Fantasy

Coming to Europe was, for many, the realisation of a fantasy. Their migration and life projects were informed by risk and insecurity in their countries of origin, but also by an ‘illusion’ of Europe which enticed them to move as part of a range of push and pull factors. This fantasy was evoked in 32 of the 58 interviews and it was also commonly a subject of young people’s artworks. Moreover, fantasy as a genre was usually coupled with expressions of hope or regret.

Rakim, an Eritrean elder, articulated the power of fantasy and its important temporal character to me one day as we were volunteering in a transit camp in Italy. ‘They [the Eritrean youth] go [to Europe], even before they arrive’, he explained, ‘mentally they are already there’... ‘And some will make it’, he insisted.

He would know. Aged 52, Rakim had been chasing his European dream for decades. And indeed, he was right: some participants have achieved much towards their fantasy goals. Among them was Erfanullah, aged 26, from Afghanistan, who was running a successful business, having married and brought his family to Italy. The story of the life projects of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men, as Rakim’s persistent optimism repeatedly reminded me, was not all star-crossed lovers and ill-fated voyages.

The dream of family reunification was commonly articulated as part of participants' life projects, alongside the idea of a grand return home. This trip back was a rite of passage that several participants with papers had realized and of which they spoke proudly, also often in epic terms. For Sibal from Bangladesh, aged 20, however, the triumphant return home was not narrated as an epic, but rather as a confession of maintaining the illusion. Yes, he had security of status and a job in Italy; but he was still poorly paid, and this was something that his family was not able to understand. Once he had got papers in Italy, he had felt compelled to borrow money to buy presents for his family and fly to Bangladesh on holiday to see them. He couldn't tell them, he explained, that he shared a room with six others and didn't even have a lamp to read.

Past research has shown that, as well as being shaped by collective and family migration strategies, young people's life projects adapt and evolve once they are in Europe (Allsopp et al. 2015; Kanics et al. 2011). Those young people in the research who were still in touch with people back home or in refugee camps or urban settings in the global south, sought to straddle their individual dreams and family obligations, sometimes with acute dissonance: the duty to study and earn more money from a profession in the long term had to be juggled against the competing desire to send money home quickly, for example; meanwhile, for some Pashtun Afghans in particular, the desire to date and have a romantic life in Europe had to be set against a competing recognition that they would one day be expected to marry a Muslim woman from 'back home'.

Fantasy as a narrative, and the ways in which it was employed in this ambiguous context, were often shaped by participants' individual dispositions and whether they were optimistic or pessimistic about their futures. Even for those facing precarious circumstances, the fantasy

of owning a house or getting documents was often an important motive which they still hoped to achieve.

Others had given up the fantasy of Europe. They coped with adversity by dreaming of the illusion of a mythologized homeland in which conditions were better. Saad, an 18-year-old Egyptian who had been refused asylum, contrasted his ‘bullshit life’ without papers in England with an idealized account of growing up in the Egyptian countryside ‘I was young that time’, he reminisced, ‘[t]hat life was happy life’. The collective narrative trope of the mythologized homeland has been noted as recurrent among scholars working with refugees (Malkki 1995).

Because he was seeking political asylum, however, it was ‘not safe’ for Saad to return. By contrast, Mohammed, a 16-year-old Egyptian in Italy who self-defined as an economically motivated migrant, was looking forward to the prospect of a return trip to his region, commenting that it was his primary motivation moving forward. He similarly idealized his homeland. For Mohammed, the main difference was that back home he had family. His homesickness affected his experience of narrative time and ontological security: ‘I feel like it’s been ten and a half years not one and a half a years since I saw my dad...’, he explained.

Other young people were motivated in moving forward with their life projects by a series of short- and long-term material goals which they saw as fundamental to the realization of their future ‘possible selves’ (Yowell 2002). These included ownership of cars – sometimes bought on credit. Again, one reason why importance was placed on having material goods was about telling a story of oneself as successful to those back home – via, for example, posting pictures of a nice new haircut or a watch on social media. Facebook – and its role in

propagating migratory fantasies – is like a ‘scab’, joked a group of Eritreans in transit in Italy: ‘you keep scratching it and it itches more and the scab gets bigger and bigger!’ They found relief in being able to joke about their common predicament as they leant each other nice clothes to take selfies to send home.

Several young people made direct distinctions between the story they told about themselves on social media and the less glamorous reality of their lives. They saw the irony in the fact that they were, in posting such pictures, propping up a mirage for which they often regretted having fallen themselves. Joseph explained the power of the fantasy in the following terms:

‘Must, must go. Must go. It’s crazy. The dream is too much’ [...] Even if you talk about the sea, the water is BOILING, they will cross it. They would rather die.

People are like this [hisses in despair].

‘People are like this’.

Joseph described this fantasy – this desire he felt – as like a hex or form of enchantment: ‘the dream is too much’. The way he talks about his obsessive compulsion to leave reminded me of Dante’s mythical Ulysses, who encourages his fellow men to act on their curiosity and sense of adventure and push beyond the straits of Gibraltar, at great risk to themselves. In one persuasive passage, Ulysses enthuses: ‘You were not made to live like brutes/but to follow virtue and knowledge!’ This passage, written by Dante when he was forcibly displaced himself in Italy almost 700 years ago, highlights the seductive pull of mobility – the desire to move forwards in space and time – as something that makes us fundamentally human: the striving beyond ourselves, the assertion of the right to aspire and dream. And, as Rakim, the

Eritrean elder reminded me, this power of narrative is something that policy makers fail to understand; it is something in the mind that no material borders can stop, whatever the infernal material conditions crossing them forces people to endure. ‘Even the ones who will leave next year’, Rakim repeated, ‘yes, they have already gone here [he points to his head]. They went, they went even before they left, and before they arrived...’

Conclusion

The evidence above is intended to demonstrate that biographical narrative is a central but as yet under-theorised element of the wellbeing of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men. This article has argued that academics and practitioners can learn much about the aspirational life projects, past experiences and support needs of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees by listening to the ways in which they narrate them, as well as from analyzing their key features. Narrative is important to understanding the aspirations of this group; their capabilities and their vulnerabilities, as well as how they understand themselves in relation to society and how likely they are to interact (or not) with the support structures within it.

The framing of their life projects as tragic, epic, comic, confessional or fantastical (or as a combination of these, depending on the audience and situation) has been shown to be an important aspect of how they come to terms with past events and build possible futures in Europe, both as individuals and collectively. Presenting themselves as heroes or anti-heroes of their own stories, participants could reconcile their vulnerable and enforced deservingness with the agency they did have to shape their futures. For some young people, telling their stories from a place of safety as epics was an empowering and transformative experience. For

to tell a story and to be heard is to leave some kind of a legacy, a trace in a society that often renders them undocumented or invisible.

This article has argued that the type of narrative told, and the opportunity to tell stories, are fundamentally linked to the sense of ontological security that has been demonstrated by prior scholarship to be so vital to the subjective wellbeing of these individuals (Chase 2013). Young people with more secure immigration status and who had spent more time in Europe were more likely to narrate their life projects as epics in which they had exerted agency, overcome obstacles and achieved something. The newly arrived often had a strong sense of fantasy and were still closely attached to dreams, while those who had spent a long time waiting with insecure status commonly recounted their tale as a tragic one, or clung to a fantasy of return. The participant's character, and the relationship with me as researcher, also had an important bearing on the way in which stories were told.

Interrogating the value of 'truth' as a defining feature of these narratives, the article has shown that similar events can be told through a range of stories, including by the same individual. Seeing stories in this way – as situated exchanges in context, rather than as monolithic truths to be 'extracted' from the field – has important implications for the ways in which we understand truth and 'evidence' in social science research.

Epilogue

Optimistic
Looking forwards
Eyes towards the sky

Hopefully we're gonna get there
Heads up high
Try to face the music
And dance
The system's not fair

Hope is to achieve better in life
Hope is to have a life
Not just survive
For better days ahead
Leaving bad ones behind

Poem constructed as part of a collective poetry writing exercise led by the author in England, 2017, written by former unaccompanied minors based in England originally from Afghanistan, Eritrea and Albania.

Conclusion and Discussion

This conclusion provides a summary of how this thesis has responded to the main research question and to the three sub-questions into which it was broken down. After a brief reminder of my main questions and research approach, it considers some of the strengths and limitations of the research. I summarise the key themes of each paper and expand upon these in more detail where there was not sufficient space to do so in the body of the thesis. I discuss the policy and practice implications of the thematic content of each paper and draw out further analysis as well as some implications for future research.

I conclude by highlighting three central themes of the research: the (bio)politics of masculinity, processes of care and control, and the role of storytelling and its link to ontological security. I correlate these findings to the proposed advancement of three new rights for unaccompanied young migrants and refugees: the right to not be subject to invasive age assessment and other bio-political procedures (Fassin 2001; Crawley and Rolands 2007); the right not have to break the law in order to be able to meet fundamental needs (Wolff and De Shallit 2007); and the right to dream and tell a story on one's own terms (Jackson 2013).

A Response to the Research Questions: The Problem of Dreams

At a conference in Brussels in 2010 on irregular youth migration from Africa to Europe (because, as often is the case, this was the direction of the flow under debate) there was one African attendee (all the others, I was told, had been refused visas). When asked by an attendee what it would take to stop the migration and why people were not responsive to the warnings and propaganda regarding the risks of irregular migration, her response was

mocked for being overly facile and simple: ‘the thing is,’ she remarked, ‘migration is about dreams.’ She continued:

‘Until we can find a way to get inside these young people’s heads and re-programme their dreams, we will struggle to ever fully control migration.’

Yes, she concluded, ‘dreams are the hardest thing to regulate of all’.

One highly respected policy expert at the time tweeted, ‘it’s guff like this that gets in the way of evidence-based policy making...’.

This ‘policy expert’ may have an excellent knowledge of migration data, but he did not know what the Eritrean elder cited in the Prologue to this thesis knew, that is the power of the dream and of the life project, that ‘they [the young people] go, even before they arrive’.

This thesis has presented and analysed a range of primary and secondary data which were drawn from mixed methods qualitative research which took place over a period of 18 months in two cities in England and Italy between 2015 and 2016. It examined the following primary research question:

Key research question: How do unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men in two cities in England and Italy understand statutory and non-statutory forms of welfare and

methods of immigration control and how and why do they do they interact with them as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?

This key research question was broken down into three sub-questions:

Sub-question 1: (i) What are the different types of welfare, both statutory and non-statutory (e.g. state, NGOs, religious organisations, solidarity groups, family, friends and social networks) available to young unaccompanied migrant and refugee men as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25? (ii) How and why do these young men interact with these support provisions as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?

Sub-question 2: How do different types of statutory and non-statutory welfare, immigration control and support provisions shape the decision-making, wellbeing and future trajectories of young unaccompanied migrants and refugee men as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?

Sub-question 3: What other factors shape the decision-making, wellbeing and likely future life projects of young unaccompanied migrants and refugee men as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?

The Introduction to this thesis explained how these questions were chosen and evolved throughout the course of the research.

With these research questions, this thesis has sought to ask what policy makers and academics in this context – with some important exceptions cited herein (e.g. Chase 2013a, 2013b; Schuster 2005, 2011; Schuster and Majidi 2013, 2015) – have thus far been loath to answer: *why*?

Why, to paraphrase Castles (2004) in paper two, do social and migration policies at the local, national and transnational level keep ‘failing’ to control migrants?

Why, in a parody of the Nietzschean moral question of the eternal return which asks what it means to have a ‘good life’, might they – as this thesis has shows – come back time and time again to Europe, to the place where they see their life as having meaning, even after experiencing a sea of hardships and indignities such as detention and deportation?

We have seen that unaccompanied young migrants and refugees position themselves in relationships of respective proximity or distance to statutory and other non-statutory forms of welfare in Europe over time depending on the extent to which they perceive these as helping or hindering the advancement of subjective and collective life projects.

Though unpacking the dreams of young migrants and refugees was not the primary purpose of this study, these dreams were shown to be fundamental in terms of the extent to which they shaped young people’s willingness to embrace risk and their interactions with statutory and other forms of welfare as they came of age in Europe. Indeed, life projects emerged in the research as central to answering my primary research question and all the sub-questions.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research

I have sought to address the strengths and limitations of this research both in the Introduction and throughout the thesis. There are, however, a number of limitations to this research based on my particular methodology that merit further attention here.

Approach to research

It is important to note, firstly, that the impulse to construct a coherent narrative applies to me as researcher, and to this thesis as a body of work as much as to the life projects of my research participants. Thus, I have purposefully sought to avoid over-simplification. The result is a thesis that invites, I hope, further questioning and interrogation. For, as Lubet warns, ‘the quest for telling a compelling story’ too often leads researchers to ‘sculpt data to fit their preferred theory of the world’ (2017: 130). The stakes are simply too high to keep doing this; that is, to pretend we can control a phenomenon as diverse, complex and multi-scalar as human mobility

By bridging the academic divide between social policy, youth studies, migration studies, and refugee studies, this research has advanced a new understanding of how a particular group of migrant young people and potential ‘citizens in the making’ (Drammeh 2010) comprehend, interact with and at once shape and perform their life projects over space and time in relation to statutory and non-statutory forms of welfare and immigration control and governance. Life projects, in this context, have been understood as primarily related to the individual or collective hopes and aspirations of the young people, and to their decision-making and future trajectories as they transition towards adulthood in a state of mobility and/or exile.

This research has taken young people's life projects seriously, as they intended them and asked for them to be treated. At the same time, it has not shied away from documenting the very real material and psychological violence that young people endure as they seek to cross borders (Schuster 2005; De Genova N and Peutz N 2014) or rather to stay in – or return to – homes of their own making (Korac 2009). We have also seen their ability to laugh in the face of adversity and make comedy out of tragedy (see paper four).

Although in recent years some academic work in social policy and migration and refugee studies has advanced a social policy and economic approach that seeks to 'match' economic migrants', asylum seekers' and refugees' skill-sets and career pathways with the needs of host states (e.g. Ruhs 2015; Betts and Collier 2017), in general the question of the 'migrant dream' is usually written off by policy makers and academics. Yes, the question of the life project or 'migration dream' is a hugely rich *cultural* trope, but it is nevertheless considered a perplexing one that sits 'over there' with the other humanities and softer sciences. While the real-life Odyssey is staged repeatedly at our shores, migration policy makers and scholars get on with the 'serious work' of deconstructing and reconstructing borders. Surely, they seem to posit, this is another question of governance which we can counter with more money, fences and militarism?

At the time of writing, the EU budget for migration management for the next period had recently been announced at three-times that of the previous period: 'for the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027', reads the press release, 'the Commission proposes to almost triple funding for migration and border management to €34.9 billion, as compared to €13 billion in the previous period (European Commission 2018).' If past budgets serve as a guideline, a

significant proportion of this money will be dedicated to controlling unaccompanied youth migration. Initiatives funded by the Union so far have included awareness raising campaigns in the countries of origin, the erection and policing of new borders within the African continent and strategies of militarism and deterrence in the Mediterranean Sea (Carling and Hernández-Carretero 2011; Allsopp 2017b; Carrera et al. 2018a, Carrera et al 2018b). Meanwhile, opportunities for legal migration from the global south to the global north remain few and far between.

I am often asked what, in this highly governed context, has the question of controlling irregular migratory movements got to do with life projects – the stuff of dreams? The answer is that the policy context in which this money on controlling irregular migration is spent is often as poorly researched as it is cash rich (Carrera and Allsopp 2017). And without understanding this migration and the dreams and aspirations that fuel it we will, as the African woman stated at the policy conference in Brussels, struggle to regulate anything with any efficiency at all.

In its bottom-up approach, this thesis has attempted to shift focus from controlling and governing to understanding, in the hope that this contributes to academic knowledge and to more informed policy making in this field. It would be interesting to consider why policymakers might be unable or unwilling to contend with the stuff of dreams: what types of policy straitjackets and political imperatives make dreams and aspirations seem inadequate ‘evidence’ for evidence-based policy?

In placing the life projects of young people at the centre of its analysis and working outwards, this thesis has deliberately adopted a different and at times provocative approach to social

policy and migration and refugee studies. It has taken seriously the intentions – mistaken as they may or may not have been – of the thousands of young people who died in and also crossed the Mediterranean last year seeking to reach a better future in Europe; of the 10,000 unaccompanied children registered as ‘missing’ from institutional care in 2016 (Europol 2017); and of the hundreds more who are moving strategically across Europe’s borders as I write and you read, seeking better opportunities. The latter group includes, as seen in papers one and two, movements between EU member states such as Italy and England.

This thesis remembers those who have died and also takes seriously the achievements of those who have succeeded against the odds, often in epic terms (see paper four). Individuals such as Gulwalli Passerly who during this research gave me a copy of the story of his own life project which was recently published in the monograph, *The Lightless Sky: An Afghan Refugee Boy's Journey of Escape to A New Life* (2017).

The limits of the sample

A number of limitations are evident in relation to the sample. For one, participants were highly mobile which posed a challenge to some aspects of the longitudinal component of the research. Another key risk with semi-structured interviews and ethnography is that marginalised voices fall by the wayside, with the research serving to further amplify the voices of the most outspoken and minimise, by contrast, those in the most subaltern positions (Spivak 1988). As discussed in more detail in the Introduction, to avoid privileging the most ‘stimulating’ narratives, and to acknowledge subjective bias, I conducted a dual strategy of thematic coding and narrative analysis. Nevertheless, in feeding back my findings to participants I was especially aware that it was often the most

outspoken who would speak out and comment when they felt I had misinterpreted or missed something.

As discussed in the Introduction, the mixed methods approach to this research also sought in some ways to mitigate this bias. I ensured that when I spoke to service providers, for example, that I asked about particularly vulnerable groups who were not represented in my semi-structured interviews. These included unaccompanied young migrants and refugees who were too unwell mentally or physically to participate in interviews and survivors of trafficking. Their voices are, importantly, nevertheless largely missing from this thesis and this is a particular limitation of paper four. Along with the stress of narrative and storytelling throughout this thesis it is important to recognise, as scholars have before me, the importance of silence – of what is *not* said or not heard (Kohli 2006a; Chase 2013a, 2013b; Spivak 1988).

In this vein, while the focus on men was a well-informed and pragmatic choice, as explained in the Introduction, at times I was concerned that it risked further marginalising the smaller population of women in my research sites. As a means of mitigating this risk, I also conducted interviews with some women. I saw these interviews as part of the background to this thesis project, but I have also used this material and written about their experiences elsewhere, such as in my forthcoming book co-authored with Chase, *The Politics of Wellbeing in Transition*. I have also written about them in a series of blogs²¹.

²¹ See for example my article ‘Disposable Girls’, published on the website openDemocracy 50.50 in March 2015: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/jennifer-allsoopp/disposable-girls..>

Other short-comings with my sample included issues with comparing the two field sites. Not only was one city substantially bigger than the other, but in Italy I was linked through my participant observation to *two* institutions whereas in England I was only linked to *one*. This made my sample more restrictive in England and also changed the way in which participants responded to me. As I have discussed throughout the papers, the Italian context was in many ways more ‘open’ meaning that it was easier to recruit participants. This is reflected in the larger number of interviewees from Italy (see Appendix E). In article two, I argued that this openness to research and relative absence of mistrust was in itself a feature of Italy’s ‘colander welfare regime’ as well as a function of my own status as a ‘transitory migrant’ there.

Quantifying data

In Appendix E and F, I have included quantified data related to the frequency of type of narrative genres used by interview participants in talking about their life projects (tragedy, comedy, epic, confession, fantasy), and also the frequency of different migratory life projects articulated in these interviews (safety, education, work and family/social networks reunification). These topics are discussed in papers one, three and four. There are significant shortcomings with quantifying these qualitative data which is why I have included them for discussion here, but not dwelled upon them greatly in the papers of the thesis.

The sample is not representative. Thus, the figures simply give a lens through which to further probe the specifics of the qualitative data. They may, at most, give us some hints about dominant patterns in the specific field sites as part of a broader strategy of framework analysis (see Introduction).

Secondly, the way I classified the data under each heading, both for narrative genre and for type of life project was clearly shaped by my subjective interpretations of these genres and motives (see paper four).

There are also important differences between the Italian and English samples. Individuals within the population in Italy were more likely to be in transit to other countries, for example, which probably influenced the relative candidness of some of their responses.

The prevalence of work as a predominant life project among the Italian sample respective to its relative weaker importance in the English sample may be reflective of the different systems into which the young people were integrated which prioritise work and education differently, as we have seen in paper two. Moreover, the numbers also suggest that individuals in the English sample are more motivated by seeking sanctuary, although again, this analysis is at best anecdotal and at worst risks distorting the truth. Participants were also less likely to tell me about family members present in the country or other European countries which motivated their migration projects because of suspicions that I would report this information to the care centres. In summary, the quantitative data in the tables should be used with caution.

While in its multi-sited approach this research has sought to provide analysis of dynamics at once above and below the level of borders, it is also unquestionably limited in its focus on just two field sites. As such, many findings are not generalisable. Further research would be required, for example, to test my hypothesis, thus far based primarily on anecdotal evidence, that the ‘iron rod welfare’ versus ‘colander welfare’ dynamic in England and Italy may

reflect a broader two-tier protection system across the EU. This finding, if the case, would go a long way in explaining other types of secondary movement and strategies of mobility within the Union.

Questioning what is evidence

By adopting throughout this thesis, the epistemological framework of storytelling, which recognises the socially constructed nature of knowledge, I am aware that I have blurred the boundary between what is considered fact and fiction in research evidence (Clandinin and Connelly 2000; Lubet 2017; Carrera and Allsopp 2017). Often, going over my interviews and field notes, I realised that rather than using the term ‘data’ I was employing the language of stories. I prefer this term, since it links to the inherently narrative aspect of life projects, and recognises that evidence in this thesis stems primarily from moments of knowledge creation that were situated in a specific place and time, and which I was in part co-constructing through my presence – both through the act of listening, and through creating a space in which their stories could be told. At the same time, as discussed in more detail below, where individuals did *not* want to participate it was important that their silence was respected (Chase 2012; Kohli 2006a).

Capturing change over time and the limits of comparative analysis/multi-sited ethnography

As explained in the Introduction, I mitigated the bias towards focusing in on the themes of most interest to me personally in my ethnographic analysis through pursuing a dual strategy of coding the participant interviews both narratively and by theme. I also coded my field notes thematically. Inevitably there will be aspects of experiences that I failed to notice or to

note down to begin with because of my personal bias, lack of language skills and also because of my disposition at the time of field research (e.g. more awake early in the morning versus tired at the end of a long day of volunteering).

I accept with enthusiasm the qualitative data depository provided by the ESRC who funded this research as a means to keep my interview data and field diaries so that they may be consulted and further analysed by future researchers. This practice goes, of course, with the caveat that there are always risks in separating qualitative data from its context, and especially ethnographic data from the researcher. For, as Freire has argued:

‘an empirical study will produce conclusions without truth if it is disarticulated from the socio-cultural reality within which the subjects of the study are situated’ (Freire 1998: xxxi).

I hope that my frankness here and throughout the thesis has provided a useful framework for approaching these data in the future.

Other shortcomings of the evidence given in the research include the fact that the policy landscape under study was one that was rapidly shifting. This thesis sought to capture events unravelling across two locations over a period of time; as such, some of the findings related to specific mobility strategies may be no longer relevant to the policy context. It is hoped that findings related to life projects are more resounding.

The strengths and limits of artistic methods and the ‘tyranny of participation’

Artistic methods were successfully employed in parts of this thesis as means of eliciting narrative *data*, as a source of *analysis*, and as a way of *communicating findings* in a humane way that could be understood by many difference audiences, including by research participants and the wider public. The use of artistic methods, it is hoped, helped to shift the locus of knowledge production from a more positivist ‘extraction’ model (Kuntz 2016) to one that embraced a plurality of voice and difference.

On a practical level, many of the artistic methods employed to help young people to tell their stories in a range of forms as they felt most comfortable meant that they shared information about skills they possessed that were useful in their integration in European society – pictures of their experience and skills in animal husbandry, mechanics, sailing, falconry and languages (see, for example, Lika’s ‘Museum of Self’ in Appendix H and Mesr’s ‘doors’ in Appendix G).

Artistic methods helped some young people who felt shy in speaking out come forwards, however, they also may have served to alienate other young people who felt embarrassed by their lack of artistic skills or experience.

The idea of ‘the tyranny of participation’ refers to the fetishisation of participation as a good in and of itself in a facile way that overwrites the legitimacy of certain strategies of silence. It also refers to activities which are tokenistic and which do not, in practice, give participants space to speak (Haile et al. 2018).

I reflected on this term after I participated in a workshop in which some local artists organised a painting activity for a group of young asylum seekers. The young people came

dressed in their finest clothes for the event which they promptly ended up getting covered in paint that would not wash out. The organisers had not considered the need for aprons – ‘no-one usually asks’, they said.

I spent much of the next week scrubbing Adidas jumpers as participants bemoaned the fact that they had messed up their best clothes and not really enjoyed the activity anyway.

Meanwhile, the hosts proudly boasted of the resounding success to the activity on their website. This is just one example and I do not mean to demonise the hosts. Indeed, I recount it because I can relate to such well-intentioned shortsightedness. I have unquestionably been complicit in many such incidents over the course of this research – of failing to notice when a space designed to liberate became in some ways oppressive for participants.

The politics of voice and the ownership of stories

The artistic and narrative methods used throughout this thesis were fundamentally linked to the articulation of life projects through spaces of storytelling. Throughout the fieldwork, narrating a story was often something precious and enjoyable for participants. Jackson has argued – in this respect – that storytelling as a methodology is a form of existential ‘play’ in the ‘intersubjective-in-between’ (Jackson 2013: 23, 252). Storytelling in this research opened up a relational space in which power could be contested and identities transformed; it was space in which private meanings could be transformed into public ones. It also permitted the temporary suspension of the loneliness that was a feature for many unaccompanied migrants, through actively encouraging them to ‘relate’ to others. In storytelling, not only are participants able to engage with the researcher but, as several participants explained, their

hope is that by telling their stories, and their hopes and dreams, they can help improve conditions for others.

Over the course of the research, public venues such as museums were used to create spaces of dialogue and exchange between participants and the population as a whole and to contribute to not separating this group away from other young people as ‘the other’. Crucially, as well as creating spaces to give voice to participants, it is also important for researchers to bring together audiences so they can be *heard*. Too often valuable research outputs remain sat in desk draws somewhere in a file labeled ‘impact for impact’s sake’.

Examples of research outputs facilitated by this research which tried to create open spaces and audiences for stories to be told by participants (and in forms in which they could decide) included the animation *Dear Habib*, two art exhibitions and catalogues, a series of comedy sketches and a song and music video. The latter narrates a collective, gendered, experience of ‘Becoming Adult in Another Man’s Land’. I have also travelled with several research participants to international policy conferences at which they have spoken and connected with wider European youth networks in order to amplify their voices.

There is a clear limitation in the fact that these outputs privilege the more outspoken among participants and also give opportunities to those with more mobility than others. I sought to mitigate this by linking participants though Skype for involvement in certain outputs such as the Becoming Adult song that was recorded in two studios in London and Rome. Still, certain voices were unquestionably sidelined and I felt terrible when one young person from the UK, in particular, was denied a visa to an event in Italy. Language

skills were also consistently a key part of the politics of voice, policing participants' access to and involvement in a range of the research spheres.

A further question is that of the ownership of stories. Ordóñez (2008: 58) has argued that without due caution, ethnography may fall into the trap of 'writing people's lives' in a way that is incomprehensible to them. As researchers, we often see migrants' and refugees' stories as precious resources. Accordingly, we act like thieves, going into the field and extracting them without returning the benefits to those who have shared so much with us. The postcolonial ethics of research to which this thesis has aspired (and to which it undoubtedly, in many ways, has fallen short) requires researchers to move beyond the assumption of anonymity²²; it requires us to take seriously the obligation that we must help give participants the opportunity to *raise their voice* – and in a variety of ways and means, including through the arts and oral histories. One good example here concerns the magazine Griot in Italy, through which migrants and refugees passing through a particular city are invited to share art or stories about themselves. These are self-edited and published and kept in an online and physical repository. Some of the stories collected in this research – including the Becoming Adult song – contributed to this magazine.

The politics of migration research

Finally, migration studies is a discipline that I am aware is highly political. In a climate in which migrants and refugees are political targets for racialised and gendered scapegoating, there is a risk of research perpetuating harmful social stereotypes.

²² Though this obviously still important in many protection cases.

In an effort to be transparent as well as ethical, I have not shied away from contentious topics in migration and youth studies, as (in my personal observations) scholars often do. These include, for example, topics such as the sexual and relational lives of young refugee men and the question of lying versus truth. Given the significant numbers of young migrant men who have arrived in Europe in the last few years, I believe that their emotional and relational lives and needs are also too important for their successful long-term integration to be ignored.

And as for the question of lies and truth, I feel satisfied that Wolff and De Shalit's (2007) framework for a new right to not have to lie to access basic rights is a solid foundation on which to have this discussion responsibly. This question is, of course, ultimately one of political philosophy; its significance goes far beyond the realms of migration and asylum and affects us all. Participants also repeatedly asked me to raise these issues which influenced my decision to do so.

I also agree with Lubet that such openness is a prerequisite of serious evidence-based ethnography (2017). I hope that my candour in not ignoring certain difficult topics is taken in good faith, alongside my attempt to provide rigorous analyses and a rich contextualising of these phenomena. I am aware that fieldwork is a deeply personal and political endeavor in which questions of how we can do justice to experience are linked to questions of social justice (Jackson 2013: 96).

While in this research I have sought to situate the migrant subject in the context of a wider set of social relations across space and time, I am also conscious that in many ways my research has also further fetishised methodological nationalism and reified the migrant subject as

‘other’ (Beck and Beck 2008). While not meaning to minimise the hardships many have endured, it is important to note – and I hope that in future research I will have the time and resources to test my belief that – some of the young people’s experiences in this research could be true of any young person. Indeed, youth in and of itself is a period of mobility and displacement which is experienced in myriad, complex ways (Thomson and Holland 2004; Honwana 2012).

Summary of Key Findings of Each Paper and Further Implications

Each of the four papers comes with a range of additional theoretical and policy implications which there was not sufficient space in the body of the text to discuss. I will now summarise the key findings of each paper before expanding upon these.

Paper One: Best Interests, Durable Solutions and Belonging: Future Prospects for Unaccompanied Migrant Minors Coming of Age in Europe

Paper one argued that unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men usually have clear – albeit evolving – ideas about the objective(s) of their migration and the opportunities born from their mobility. Yet the ways in which the life projects of unaccompanied young migrants and asylum seekers are understood and channelled in policy terms were shown to often not correspond to the young person’s wants, desires and actions in real time. The paper gave a number of reasons for this. They included the politics of institutional versus subjective experiences of ageing; and the fact that young peoples’ aspirations change over time in ways for which ‘the system’ is unprepared, or to which it fails to respond.

We saw that this divergence between the aims and intentions of the young people and their networks and the welfare and immigration apparatuses can lead to a range of unintended policy consequences. This included young people going missing from institutional care and transitioning into illegality (Gonzales 2011) as they approached institutional adulthood at the age of 18 (or of 17.5 in England – see paper one) and/or pursuing strategies of secondary migration and/or remigration after their return to countries of entry into the EU or to their countries or origin (Schuster and Majidi 2015). These issues were further discussed in Paper Two.

A few thematic areas and examples of ‘best practice’ are worth drawing out from paper one and from the research as it concerns this area more generally.

A bottom up perspective on welfare and immigration control

Paper one identified various data gaps and a notable lack of joined-up working between authorities in Italy and England, as well as poor collaboration between local authorities within each country (see also Chase and Allsopp 2014; Sigona and Humphries 2018). The research also found poor coordination of the Dublin III family reunification mechanism across Europe (by which unaccompanied minors should be able to be relocated to claim asylum with other family members in Europe).

As noted in the Introduction, paper one was original in starting from the perspective of migrants in its consideration of the relationship between inclusion in and exclusion from the welfare state.

Developing the bottom up view of paper one, more work could be done to compare the experiences of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men to other sub-groups. How do migrant families, for example, experience the hitherto under-theorised relationships between welfare regimes, labour markets, and asylum and immigration regimes (what I refer to in paper two, as the nexus of ‘care and control’)? How do the experiences of migrant women compare to those of men in relation to seeing welfare as a disciplinary as well as an emancipatory social regime? And how and why do other groups of marginalised youth or unemployed men experience welfare as a tool of control or surveillance? These are all questions that merit further enquiry.

Individual versus collective life projects and experiences

A further thematic thread that emerged in paper one and which ran throughout the thesis was how young individuals who migrate alone to Europe experience the tension between the pursuit of their individual aspirations and the collective aspirations of those around them. In the latter field, I included both their families and friends in their countries of origin and established and emerging social networks in their host countries in Europe (Bankston III 2014).

This theme speaks to the multiple ways in which young people struggle with, but also successfully adapt to, the individualistic society which they find in Europe and to how they fit their dreams into the shifting opportunity structures there. In certain cases, as we also saw in paper three, unaccompanied young migrants and refugees consciously perform certain identities in order to conform with one or other gendered type of ‘deserving’ migrant. Acts as simple as pulling down a hood upon encountering police, or of carrying around a book to

look studious, are important performances of identity that help to situate young people within certain hegemonic narratives.

Other fault-lines between institutional structures and lived experiences which are worthy of further exploration include the multiplicity of aspirations that characterise the life projects of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men, for example their desire to seek safety *and* make money – i.e. to be an asylum seeker *and* a labour migrant. This duality of purpose is also discussed in paper two of this thesis. With some important exceptions (e.g. Nicolini 2010; Long 2013a; Bloch et al. 2012), the theme of mixed migration has hitherto still been ill explored; this is especially the case as it relates to children and youth (Crivello 2011).

The tension between the culture of the migrant individual and that of the host society in which they seek to build a future is relevant to, but only briefly touched upon in paper one. This is because it has been documented elsewhere (Sierakowska-Dyndo J 2014; Abbasi and Monsutti 2017; Allsopp et al. 2018). In our study of Albanian cinema and other cultural media (Allsopp et al. 2018), colleagues and I found that the theme of the young family man ‘corrupted by the individualistic west’ was a common trope of popular narratives of youth migration, for example. Experiences of guilt, shame and deception in relation to this dual strategy of trying to fulfil family obligations and at the same time to satisfy personal goals (such as the acquisition of educational and language skills, or the pursuit of romantic relationships) is something also touched on in paper three which merits further investigation.

The use of legal guardians and cultural mediators were shown to be a useful bridge between young people and the statutory and non-statutory welfare support infrastructures, as well as a

way of them staying connected to their cultures of origin. Importantly in the context of ‘care and control’, these mentors provided a means to advocate on their behalf *independently* of the state.

Paper Two: English Iron Rod Welfare versus Italian Colander Welfare: How Unaccompanied Minors Challenge the Myth of a Common Asylum Policy in Europe

Paper two built on paper one in addressing the topic of how life project planning in real time can put young people at odds with the systems designed (on paper) to assist them to fulfil their potential. It did through critically analysing traditional typologies of welfare and immigration regimes, specifically, their usefulness to making sense of the experiences of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men coming of age in Europe. The paper spoke directly to the academic social policy and migration studies literature. It argued that a dichotomy of protection had emerged in Europe at the time of research for those with insecure legal status as they turned 18. This was between higher protection with a greater risk of deportation in England on the one hand and lower protection with less of a deportation risk in Italy on the other.

A dichotomy of protection across European states

This finding adds to a growing body of evidence that challenges the idea of a common European asylum system by showing that important differences exist between member states which shape the trajectories of individuals and whole groups of migrants.

Evidence advanced in paper two also confirms past findings regarding the existence of a relatively small but nevertheless important level of mobility and secondary migration both between Italy and England and between England and Italy. Trends of secondary migration towards other European and non-European states have also been identified and discussed, but more research is needed in this area.

These shifting ‘mobility biographies’ (Franberg 2014) represent an important new development in European migration patterns. Indeed, the perceived presence of the state as a force of regulation, control, surveillance and potential violence (through detention or deportation) is an important aspect unexplored in prior research (Schuster 2005; Bloch and Schuster 2005; Andersson 2014). This is particularly relevant in terms of how the position of the state shapes secondary migration across both regions and nation states.

As it stands, the difference in material conditions between EU member state has prompted a small but significant secondary movement of young people (especially from Afghanistan) both nationally, and across countries in Europe (see articles one and two). For many young people, certain life projects or dreams are perceived to be – or simply are in material terms – better suited to certain national and local contexts within Europe.

Paper two referred to this difference as one between ‘English iron rod welfare’ and ‘Italian colander welfare’. Three structural factors were shown to distinguish the two: (i) the nature of the labour market and opportunities for regularisation; (ii) the generosity, and role, of the state in the welfare mix; and (iii) the intersection between welfare provision and immigration enforcement.

The problem with traditional welfare typologies

Traditional welfare typologies were shown, in paper two, to fall short in accounting for such experiences. They were found short in particular in the following key ways: (i) their failure to take account of shifting categorisations and how the stratification of social rights plays out over time; (ii) their static bias which fails to consider how young migrants move in and out of categories and between places over time, including in relation to the labour market; (iii) and their inadequate attention to the increasing intersection of welfare access and immigration control. This last aspect is a particularly significant component of how welfare is experienced for unaccompanied young migrants and refugees, and a key determinant of whether they ‘go missing’ and how they interact with statutory and non-statutory welfare over time.

Findings from this research also suggest some important differences in political culture and practice between EU member states in relation to the way in which social rights are conceptualised as an individual versus a collective good. This was tentatively noted in relation to Italy’s more clientelist and familialistic versus England’s more state-dominated welfare regime. These differences in welfare regime were shown to shape the integration and labour market experiences of participants. In Italy, for example, participants felt that it was easier to be invisible and to work undetected in the informal labour market and also to obtain documents through work. In England, meanwhile, wages were higher but so too was the risk of being detained and deported for living without residence documents which were more difficult to obtain in the short and long term.

The unintended policy consequences that stem from policies being put into practice in divergent ways across EU member states require further analysis, especially as they relate

to the understudied phenomenon of secondary migrant movements of asylum seekers within Europe. Such research is not easy with a population whose strategising for safety may involve periods of deliberate invisibility, as was demonstrated throughout this research.

Decision making in a precarious context

Building on themes from article one, article two adds a further dimensions to our understanding of how participants strategically moved in and out of relationships of proximity and distance to various support structures as they sought to move ahead with their life projects. This was often not just in spite of the state, but also – as in the case of avoiding detention or deportation – actively *because of it*.

Because of a lack of firewall protections and increased data sharing between government departments and local, regional, national and, in some cases, international authorities, access to formal welfare for this group came with costs associated with immigration control, such as fear of deportation. Woolf and De Shalit's (2010) conception of 'disadvantage' was used – alongside notions of 'risk' (Williams and Baláž 2012; Beck 2015) – to theorise the ways in which the young men in the research navigated, and made decisions in, this context.

The labour market was shown to be an important part of many young people's life projects, both in order to pay off debt incurred for the voyage and/or to provide for their families back in their countries of origin or in other places of exile. More research could be conducted to relate their experiences to broader patterns of young people's experiences of precariousness, economic insecurity and delayed transitions to adulthood (Enria 2018). This is a phenomenon

which Honwana refers to in Africa as ‘waithood’ (2012). Future research could involve work with other youth in the countries of origin as well as in the countries of migration.

Rising populism and the ‘hostile environment’

Finally, although it is largely beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to note, as I do in article two, that the policy priorities identified in this research are sometimes fueled by hostile migration and welfare policies. We saw this in relation to the ‘iron rod’ welfare regime in England, the so-called ‘hostile environment’ of which I have written about with colleagues in more detail elsewhere (Carrera et. al. 2018: 44-95; Allsopp 2017b). While in this thesis, this strictly controlled environment was identified as a characteristic of the English ‘iron rod’ care and control nexus in contrast to what was identified as Italy’s ‘colander regime’, it is important to stress that since the fieldwork for this research was conducted, Italy’s migration and welfare agenda has also become increasingly rigid and hostile. Elsewhere, I identify this shift as in part influenced in part by populist politics and in part by wider dynamics perpetrated by the EU and its respective Home Affairs agencies (Carrera et al. 2016; Allsopp 2016; Allsopp and Manieri 2016).

Paper Three: Agent, Victim, Soldier, Son: Intersecting Masculinities in the European ‘Refugee Crisis’

Paper three suggested that the life projects of young migrants and refugee men are also in part shaped by bio-political (Fassin 2001; Foucault 2008) hegemonic, culturally-situated ideas of masculinity. Participants both contested these and leant into them in order to perform strategic masculinities that would help or hinder them to access to certain statutory and non-

statutory welfare resources. The political framing of young migrants and refugees in popular media and the rise of xenophobia and islamophobia in relation to unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men was identified as an area that merits further exploration.

Connecting to themes emerging from papers one and two, hegemonic tropes related to masculinity were traced to the legal and social constructs that migrants faced on arrival in the EU in the form of the welfare, labour market and asylum systems, as well as being authored by or perpetuated by the migrant men.

A number of other key themes emerged from paper three.

Agency and vulnerability

Paper three concluded by calling for a more intersectional approach to refugee masculinities which recognises the gender-specific displacement experiences of boys and men and acknowledges that they cannot be cast as either victims on the one hand or soldiers on the other but instead should be seen as at once vulnerable and agentic. Several participants had experienced sexual or other forms of violence or had been forced to flee because of persecution relating to their families or sexuality; their gender was significant in shaping how they and others understood these events and how they navigated the events' afterlives. In some cases persecution was directly related to their gender identities. These included incidents of violence committed towards sons borne from mothers who had passed away in polygamous families, persecution of individuals based on their sexual orientation, the threat of recruitment into armed forces, and one case football grooming and trafficking.

Using this data, alongside others, paper three contributed to literature that challenges the vulnerable/agentive binary (Griffiths 2012; Anderson 2012).

It was beyond the scope of paper three, but it is nevertheless important to note that as a group unaccompanied young men in the research generally placed a particular importance on the physical body as part of their health. Gym and sports were especially popular and related to hegemonic ideas of masculine strength and strategies for coping, including for life on the streets after they turned 18. Meanwhile, in both field sites I witnessed cases of extremely poor mental health provision. There were reports of oversubscription of anti-depressant medications and poor healthcare in both countries. This area of health merits further exploration.

Improved language learning was shown in paper three and elsewhere to be related to the performance of gender identity in the sense that it enabled participants to secure a degree of independence and to integrate with youth of their own age in the country of migration, including girls (and to a lesser extent, boys). More could be done to recognise young people's existing competences in language skills, for example, through formal qualifications. This has been the case with a group lobbying for Somali as a recent addition to GCSEs in the UK (Brighter Futures 2012). As well as improving young people's self-esteem, such recognition might help young people secure jobs and training opportunities going forwards.

A final key finding of paper three was that a lack of privacy in institutional support settings was related in some cases to incidents of violence. As well as the importance of creating spaces for young people to tell stories, of equal importance was the importance of privacy and, for example, having a space to enact and receive support for certain expression of

vulnerability through acts such as crying. The research encounter was one such space. The politics of privacy and visibility in reception arrangements (and indeed in research) merits further exploration at the levels of theory and practice.

The emotional and relational lives of migrants and refugees

Findings presented in paper three, along with paper four, have suggested that the emotional and relational lives of the young migrants and refugees in this research were also central to their conceptions of wellbeing and futures and, in several cases, to the decisions that they made in interacting (or not) with public welfare and immigration control. Paper three also showed how this aspect of their private life intersected importantly with gender and race. The emotional and relational needs of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men is an important blind spot in policy responses to the wellbeing needs of this group.

The question of what ‘unaccompanied’ means was contested in this context. Participants were often embedded in a network of social relations across space and time, which they may or may not have divulged to the authorities for various reasons (see also papers one and two). As identified in paper one, elders from young people’s own communities were shown to have a key role in building trust and mentoring and acting in solidarity with them. These relationships also, however, had the potential to become exploitative. Examples of this are given throughout the thesis, such as the case of a ‘family friend’ offering a work contract on the condition that the young person works free for a year in Italy (see Paper Two).

While past research (Bloch et al. 2012; Allsopp et al. 2015) meant that I anticipated the salience of education, safety and work to the life projects of my research participants, I was

in some respects surprised by how frequently romantic and friendship relationships emerged as a source of decision making and risk taking for young men in this group. Despite having worked with unaccompanied young migrant and refugee individuals for over ten years in a range of academic and support capacities, I realised that I had also fallen into the trap of forgetting their fundamental *youth*. As a young married woman, I think my position shaped their openness regarding this topic, which was not one that I actively pursued as a line of inquiry to begin with.

In his recent book *Intimacies, Citizenship and Refugee Men* (2017), Muchoki sheds important new light on how forced migration reshapes intimate lives, with important implications for wellbeing and coping strategies. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of young men in the research were single and not involved in serious relationships and this had an important bearing on their freedom to make decisions and take risks. Most saw having a romantic relationship as a secondary goal of ‘becoming adult’ – something to be achieved in the future, once the primary goals of legal status, safety and work had been secured. Yet this idea of long-term relationships as a future goal did not mean that the young men in the research were not involved in pursuing a range of friendships and sexual and emotional relationships in the short term. These also shaped their life projects and everyday wellbeing.

Like all of us, unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men are individuals driven by feelings and impulses as much as they are rational actors. Data presented in paper three and collected throughout fieldwork suggested that a research agenda on the emotional and relational lives of young migrants and refugees should include not just amorous relationships, but platonic friendships too. Time and time again, I was struck in my fieldwork by how quickly friendships were formed. Young people took extraordinary risks to protect their

friends and these shaped their trajectories, for example, lending important sums of money, hiding friends in their housing in breach of the law, and even, in one case, risking travel to dangerous parts of Afghanistan post-return to seek out documents to help the asylum cases of friends still in Britain. Sometimes the question of where young people ended up staying in Europe was the result of the friendships they forged there, both with co-nationals and in other cases with members of the host community, such as civil society volunteers who made them feel welcome.

This research has suggested that a future research agenda on the emotional and relational lives of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees should include consideration of ongoing ties to family and social networks in countries of origin. For, as the first three papers all document, these often continued to shape the trajectories of this group. An important literature on such ‘moral economies’ already exists in African studies (Enria 2018; Honwana 2012).

For those young people who have secure legal status in Europe, there is evidence that the question of family obligations also becomes more important later on in the life course, once they come of age and reach their early and mid-twenties. The rite of passage of the ‘journey home’, or to visit family members in refugee camps in the region, was cited by several participants as a duty, be it framed as a burden or something to which they looked forward. Several young people from Afghanistan who had successfully integrated with legal documentation in Europe had married Afghan women and brought them to live with them in Italy and England. This question of family formation and of how these young people negotiate their ‘unaccompaniedness’ as they come of age or gain security of status is a whole new line of research.

Further analysis of cultural media would be one fruitful way in which to continue this investigation. This is something that has already been started by the Becoming Adult research project in its analysis of cultural media consumed in migrant-producing countries of relevance to this study (Albania, Eritrea, Afghanistan). In these studies, love and relationships featured frequently alongside the more common ‘grand narratives’ of money and safety in exile (Abbasi and Monsutti 2017; Allsopp et al. 2018).

The gendered and racialised body and the biopolitics of ageing

The topic of emotional and relational lives dealt with in paper three was, of course, also intricately linked to the issues of gender, body and race.

Paper three of this thesis demonstrated that failures to understand the gendered and racialised experiences of these young people have an important impact on the policies that shape their own – and other people’s – lives. The field of age assessment here is a particularly difficult policy terrain, as past research has documented (Crawley and Rowlands 2007). In Italy, a range of methods were being employed by officials at the time of research to determine the age of ‘age disputed’ unaccompanied migrant and refugee youth. They included measuring wrist measurements, dental examinations and in some cases a genital examination. In England, meanwhile, age assessments were conducted by social workers using a more psycho-social approach. The problems of these procedures and the associated bio-politics have been discussed at length elsewhere (e.g. Wade 2011; Fassin 2001). For the sake of this study, however, it should be noted that many actors in Italy reported the perception that black

migrants were more likely to be age contested than Arab-looking men. Official statistics on this were not available, however.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that this lack of data may betray a greater lack of awareness. At an international policy conference of EU actors working in the field of unaccompanied minors in 2017, for example, I asked a high-level Italian policy official about whether they had conducted a gender impact analysis on their policy of age assessing would-be minors, as was protocol. ‘Oh yes’, she boasted, ‘it’s much easier for the girls. We’d never put them through any of that bodily stuff...’

‘That bodily stuff’ refers to genital examinations, which at the time of writing were still being carried out on men who may have experienced violence, including sexual violence, en route. As paper three of this thesis documented, this approach to age assessment fosters extreme mistrust and humiliation vis-a-vis the reception system and fails to consider the specific vulnerabilities of young migrant men, including high levels of exposure to violence. Other experiences of having finger-prints forcibly taken in Italy (although this practice is illegal), and experiences of being beaten by police at points in their journeys through Europe, including at the Hungarian-Serbian (e.g. Szeged) border, Italian-French border (e.g. Ventimiglia) and the French-English border (e.g. Calais) were reported and shaped participants’ mistrust of and disengagement from state institutions.

Paper Four: ‘The Story is in the Telling’: Thematic Narratives, Time and Truth in the Life Projects of Unaccompanied Young Migrants and Refugees

Among other findings, the fourth and final paper of this thesis suggested that the life projects of unaccompanied young migrant and refugees men in the study were inherently relational: they were shaped by subjective ideas of their best interests and by those of their family members and social networks and by the host society institutions and support structures with which they came into contact. The content of their life projects was also linked to the range of narrative genres via which they came to be performed and recounted.

Developing previous research (Chase 2013; Kholi 2006a; Wade 2011), I argued that there is much to be learned from the ways in which the young people tell of their hopes and aspirations (or not) over time, as well as from the content of their dreams. The predominant narrative genres employed by the young people in talking about their lives and future dreams were identified as tragedy and fantasy, although comedy, confession and the epic were also identified and shown to serve specific functions. The epic, for example, was employed as a way of asserting ownership over ones story, usually from a position of relative stability. Tragedy, meanwhile, was used as a way of making sense of difficult and/or humiliating events which the individual felt powerless to change.

Several further findings and observations emerge from this focus on storytelling and narrative.

Storytelling, change and refugee status determination

Refugee status determination interviews are based on asylum seekers constructing a coherent narrative that stays the same over time. But paper four found that stories change as we make meaning of and through them over time. Paper four suggests that immigration and asylum

workers should be sensitive to the complexities of storytelling and to the deep connection of the idea of a narrative life project to questions of identity and wellbeing. As it stands, the linear and precarious nature of life project planning for this group in institutional terms fails to make space for their complex experiences over time and place. Paper four sought to provide a framework for understanding some of this complexity. It argued that storytelling can serve as a bridge to opening up these under-researched topics and themes in a way that avoids shame and allows young people to be agents of their own stories.

Truth and trust

Paper four also touched upon questions of truth and trust in research. The narrow basis on which refugee status is accorded (based on individual persecution according to one of five grounds) placed a huge burden on young people in the research who sometimes felt they had no choice but to bend the truth in order to survive a journey once embarked upon. For asylum seekers, telling the right story, and the right kind of truth comes with a great risk, even at the cost of death itself. As researchers, part of our work can be to help to mitigate this risk for asylum seekers in coming forward with uncomfortable truths. We have a vital role, as collectors and conveyors of these stories, to tell them in a way that protects participants' anonymity while also advancing a fuller and more rich and nuanced knowledge of their material circumstances and lived experiences. This is what I have sought to do in this thesis.

Paper four also argued that comedy is a tool that can foster resilience, trust and sharing among young refugee and migrant men, especially as it relates to difficult or taboo topics such as individuals' emotional lives, gender-based violence, trauma, dating and relationships. We must recognise that individual stories can blend with collective narratives and life/migratory projects as one way of trying to overcome group or community trauma and

coping and regaining agency in the face of great collective suffering (Gabriel 2014). The merging of individual and collective stories also has implications for truth, trust and refugee status determination (Jackson 2013).

Hope, risk and 'rational behaviour'

Dreams and future aspirations were identified throughout this thesis as a central component of how participants pursued strategies of mobility or immobility and engaged with statutory and other sources of welfare over space and time. As was similarly argued in articles one and three, article four found that what might be seen as an 'irrational act' that goes against the young person's best interests by the statutory care actors – such as leaving a reception centre to earn money in the irregular economy – may have its own common sense when seen from the perspective of the young person (for example, if they are required to balance the attraction of stable accommodation against the need to repay a large debt by sending money home). These different perspectives are also highly significant and deserve further inquiry.

Having drawn out some salient thematic points and policy and practice implications from each paper, the discussion will now turn to the research's integrated key themes.

Key Themes

Questions of care and control and storytelling and ontological security have been shown throughout to be central to the findings of this thesis across all the research sub-questions. Another key theme that I have sought to elucidate in this thesis is how representations of

masculinity impact on how young men are perceived by social welfare and immigration control structures and how they respond to them. I briefly summarise each of these in turn before moving on – by way of conclusion – to reiterate the arguments made in papers two, three and four for three new rights for all unaccompanied young migrants and refugees.

Masculinities and race

This thesis has argued that that there are important gendered dimensions to the transitions towards adulthood of unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men in Europe. Often, as this thesis has documented, research participants felt like they were ‘becoming adult in another man’s land’. The song created transnationally by participants in both research sites to draw out the main research findings, sought to articulate this experience:

Behind my smile
there’s a story you will never understand

We’re becoming adult in another man’s land
Too many cultures, a different language
Too many questions that need to be answered
Light then so dark
Light then so dark

We’re becoming adult in another man’s land
Why are you separating us by borders?
We are all on one Continent
Light then so dark

Light then so dark

Without any borders, we're becoming adult

Without any borders, we're becoming adult

Without any borders, we're becoming adult

In the song, research participants from Eritrea, Albania, Afghanistan and Ghana who were living at the time in Italy and England identified a common life project, a dream of coming to Europe – ‘one Continent’. They articulated a common feeling of being let down by a lack of support moving forwards, and by the chaos of the so-called common European asylum and policy regime. As a British citizen who voted against my country's exit from the EU, the song resonates with me personally in its allusion to a starkly divided continent plagued with contradictory and at times xenophobic political and bureaucratic machinations.

In a precarious context in which many participants experienced ‘becoming adult without any borders’ in Europe, this thesis has documented some ways in which they sought to construct their own subjective boundaries of the self. They did this through drawing on a range of alternative resources among their social and informal support networks. This included through storytelling as a means of maintaining a sense of narrative progression in the face of a thwarted sense of ontological security (Chase 2013, 2013b; Allsopp et al. 2015).

Repeatedly in the research, young men's gender and racialised identities were rendered either invisible or hyper visible to various support infrastructures. This had serious consequences

for how the young people engaged with or disengaged from statutory and non statutory services and for how they made sense of their lives going forwards. In Italy in particular, the question of race came up frequently as a barrier to employment opportunities. Meanwhile, Arab men were discussed in more effeminate terms by support workers and Bangladeshi men were singled out repeatedly for age assessments ‘en masse’ in Italy. This practice was critiqued by several lawyers interviewed during the research as illegal.

Despite most of the young men I interviewed reporting incidents of violence at home, en route or in Italy, there was a stress on ‘tough love’ (as one support worker put it) in their support strategies. Issues of disability, including mental illness, meanwhile, were also given scant attention. In other words, gender and race were key components of dynamics of both care and – as in the case of age assessments – control.

Care and control

This thesis has shown that their sudden transition from privileged rights holders as unaccompanied ‘children’ who are afforded equal rights in law to citizen children, to migrant ‘adults’, unaccompanied young migrants and refugees occupy a unique position in relation to the welfare state, the immigration regime and to what Sainsbury (2012) has referred to as the associated socio-political dynamics of ‘inclusion and exclusion’. It has documented how the state – alongside a growing range of third-sector and private actors – governs infrastructures which relate to the reception and control of unaccompanied young migrants and refugees, sorting them into categories such as male and female, children or young people, migrants or asylum seekers, and as trafficking survivors or refugees.

The increasing proximity between powers of immigration control and welfare access has been shown to be central to the ambiguous relationship between subjective and structural constructions of life projects. In this thesis, I have referred to this dynamic as one of ‘care and control’. Statutory and increasingly also non-governmental assistance has been shown to be increasingly the target of humanitarian policing by national and EU Home Affairs agencies (Allsopp 2017b; Carrera et al. 2018a, 2018b).

This thesis has documented how sometimes, unaccompanied migrant and refugee youth felt isolated or at risk from the very structures that are designed, on paper, to help them as they pursued pathways through European welfare, asylum and immigration regimes. This was experienced as especially acute in both England and Italy as participants turned 18. In this context, the research drew attention to the importance of a firewall for young people who have fallen into irregular immigration status for reporting crimes and accessing social rights once they turn 18.

Storytelling and ontological security

Finally, this thesis has confirmed previous findings that subjective wellbeing for unaccompanied young migrants and refugees is linked to having a sense of ‘ontological security’ – that is, a possible future over which they can exercise a degree of control (Chase 2013a, 2013b; Wade 2011). The thesis has also developed this argument in several key respects. Firstly, this research demonstrates the importance of gender to these ‘life projects’ – especially in paper three. We have also seen in paper two, through comparative analysis, that certain types of ‘life project’ are more suited to different contexts within Europe. This is a state of affairs that promotes important secondary movement by young people and challenges

the idea of a common European asylum system. Meanwhile, paper one of this thesis has confirmed past research that has shown that young migrants and refugees exercise a great deal of agency and take great risks (Williams and Baláž 2012) in pursuing their plans and fantasies of their own (and family/collective) making.

The resilience, determination and diverse capacities of this group are documented in paper four. Many participants make the Herculean efforts to keep moving forward, – to cite the poem given in the Epilogue – ‘face the music and dance’ in the face of a ‘system’ that they felt to be fundamentally ‘not fair’. The story that binds the four parts of this thesis together is, like the narratives of the young people themselves, one of tragedy and loss, but also of comedy, fantasy, hope and adventure.

This thesis has sought to demonstrate that questions of how unaccompanied young migrants and refugee men interact with statutory and non-statutory forms of welfare and immigration control over space and time, and the question of storytelling, are fundamentally interrelated. A practice-based finding from this research is that these young people should be encouraged more by support workers to see their achievements in overcoming obstacles in epic terms as an aspect of celebrating their resilience. Stories help young people to cope in the everyday and to build communities of support with one another. The act of storytelling is also important for everyday strategies of coping and moving forward.

On this basis of the above key findings, this thesis has argued that three new rights should apply to all unaccompanied young migrants and refugees.

Moving Forward: Three New Rights for Unaccompanied Young Migrants and Refugees

The first of the three new rights that have been proposed in this thesis is the right to not have to break the law in order to be able to meet fundamental needs (see paper two with reference to Wolff and De Shallit 2007).

Secondly, it follows from this research that every young migrant or refugee arriving in Europe – *male or female* – should have the right not to experience invasive genital examinations of others forms of invasive age assessments or bio-political procedures, such as the forcible taking of fingerprints (see paper three with reference to Fassin 2011, Crawley and Rolands 2007 and Foucault 2008). This is critically important for the maintenance of gender equality, social trust and human dignity, as well as for safeguarding the wellbeing of a population of individuals who may have suffered (sexual and other forms of) violence and primary and secondary trauma.

The third right is the right to articulate a dream and to tell a story and be heard on one's own terms (see article four). This final right relates in practical terms to young people's existing right to have a voice, as is codified in human rights law instruments such as in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). For as Frank – among others including Jackson (2013) – has argued: 'not least among human freedoms is the ability to tell the story differently and to begin to live according to a different story' (Frank 2010: 10). To the many young people in this research this thesis has shown, come 'hell or high water' as the saying goes, this could not be more important.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Timetable for Research

Time frame	Stage of research
October 2014 – May 2015	Literature review and scoping work
January 2015 – September 2016 + ongoing to take in any policy developments over the course of the research	Critical policy analysis
May 2015	Transfer of status
July 2015 – February 2016	Participant observation/ethnography: 8 months volunteering at support centre for young unaccompanied migrants in Rome, Italy and at another transit centre for migrants in Rome, Italy
February 2016- October 2017	Participant observation/ethnography: 9 months volunteering at support centre for young unaccompanied migrants in Leicester, England
July 2015 – October 2017	Narrative interviews with unaccompanied migrants between the ages of 16 – 25: 37 in Rome and 21 in the UK (total 58).
July 2015 – October 2017	Interviews with welfare and support providers and officials (14 in the UK – 12 of which not conducted by me by accessed through main Becoming Adult research project to which my PhD was a grant-linked studentship – and 25 in Italy).
October 2017 – January 2018	Analysis of data
June 2018	Confirmation of status
January 2018 – September 2018	Write up DPhil
September 2018	Submission of DPhil

Appendix B: Summary of Research Methods and How the Papers Engage with Them

Key research question: How do unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men in two cities in England and Italy understand statutory and non-statutory forms of welfare and methods of immigration control and how and why do they interact with them as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?				
	Critical policy analysis of local, national and European policy documents	Participant observation/ethnography conducted in youth projects working with migrant and refugee youth in the two cities (for periods of 8 and 7 months respectively). Included participatory arts-based methods)	Narrative interviews with unaccompanied migrants between the ages of 16 – 25: 58 interviews Italy no.=37 England no.=21	Interviews with welfare and support providers and officials / workers UK no.=12 (8 of which not conducted by me – access granted through main ESRC project to which my studentship is linked) Italy no.=16
Article 1: ‘Best interests, durable solutions and belonging: future prospects for unaccompanied migrant minors coming of age in Europe’ (published)	X			X
Article 2: English Iron Rod Welfare versus Italian Colander Welfare: How Unaccompanied minors challenge the myth of a Common Asylum Policy in Europe	X	X	X	X
Book Chapter 3: Agent, Victim, Soldier, Son: Intersecting Masculinities in the European ‘Refugee Crisis’ (published)	X	X	X	X
Article 4: ‘The Story is in the Telling’: Thematic Narratives, Time and Truth in the Life Projects of Unaccompanied Young Migrants and Refugees		X	X	

Appendix C: Summary of Research Questions and How the Papers Engage with Them

Key research question: How do unaccompanied young migrant and refugee men in two cities in England and Italy understand statutory and non-statutory forms of welfare and methods of immigration control and how and why do they interact with them as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?			
	Q1: (a) What are the different types of statutory and non-statutory welfare available to young unaccompanied migrants as they ‘become adult’ as institutionally defined between the ages of 16 and 25? and (b) How and why do they interact with these support provisions?	Q2: How do different types of statutory and non-statutory welfare, immigration control and support provisions shape the decision-making, wellbeing and future trajectories of young unaccompanied migrants and refugee men as they ‘become adult’, as institutionally defined, between the ages of 16 and 25?	Q3: What other factors shape their decision-making, wellbeing and future trajectories?
Article 1: ‘Best interests, durable solutions and belonging: future prospects for unaccompanied migrant minors coming of age in Europe’ (published)	X	X	
Article 2: English Iron Rod Welfare versus Italian Colander Welfare: How Unaccompanied minors challenge the myth of a Common Asylum Policy in Europe	X	X	X
Book Chapter 3: Agent, Victim, Soldier, Son: Intersecting Masculinities in the European ‘Refugee Crisis’ (published)	X	X	X
Article 4: ‘The Story is in the Telling’: Thematic Narratives, Time and Truth in the Life Projects of Unaccompanied Young Migrants and Refugees		X	X

Appendix D: Interview Data (i)

Interview sample from England (no.: 12). These tables relate specifically to paper two of this thesis.

Age ²³	Age on arrival	Code	Name	Current accommodation	Education/employment	Country of origin	Immigration/legal status
21	14	LA2	Tabir	Government funded centre in Italy (hotel), rural area (shares room with 1 other)	Vocational training (provided by the centre)	Afghanistan	AARE and deported from England to Afghanistan. Re-migrated to Italy where he has been granted 5 years' refugee protection. Currently waiting for document.
18	13	LA1	Cal	Own flat paid for via income support	Studying at college. Aim to do apprenticeship and open own business.	Afghanistan	AARE. Care leaver. Risks being deported to Afghanistan. Trying to find a solicitor who will lodge an appeal on human rights grounds
22	13	LA4	Esatullah	Own flat paid for via income support	Studying to get taxi licence. Pizza delivery. Occasional well-paid legal but challenging work	Afghanistan	Refugee status
22	13	LA6	Abil	Homeless – sofa surfing complicated by criminal record and stigma of social network	Works irregularly 60 hours a week in precarious work; seeking money for solicitor	Afghanistan	AARE. Criminal record complicates ability to lodge appeal on human rights grounds based on poor mental health.
22	16	LA3	Bilal	Homeless – sofa surfing	Not working. May have to take irregular work soon somewhere; seeking money for solicitor	Afghanistan	AARE and deported from England to Afghanistan. Re-migrated to England. Currently undocumented. Waiting for advice before lodging new asylum claim.
23	15	A1	Pakir	Government funded centre in Italy (hotel), rural area (shares room with 1 other)	Vocational training (provided by the centre)	Afghanistan	Was AARE ²⁴ in England. Migrated to Italy where he has been granted 5 years' refugee protection. Currently waiting for document.

²³ Where multiple interviews were held, this is the age at the time of the first interview. It is also important to note that approximately one fifth of the sample had their ages disputed by the government.

²⁴ All Appeal Rights Exhausted.

18	17	LEg2	Mo	Government funded shared house with 4 others (own room)	Studying at College. Not working	Egypt	Asylum seeker (waiting for decision for 6 months)
18	16	LE10	Tig	Government funded shared house with 4 others (own room)	Studying in College. Would like to study vocational course after.	Eritrea	Refugee status
19	18	LE2	Omid	Government funded shared house with 4 others (own room)	Studying independently as no right to access College. No legal right to work and disability prevents him from working irregularly.	Eritrea	Refused asylum, waiting for asylum appeal
18	17	LE1	Ali	Government funded shared house with 12 others (own room)	Studying at College but redoing basic courses as without document cannot access vocational training.	Eritrea	Refused asylum, waiting for asylum appeal
19	17	LI1	Filman	Government funded shared house with 3 others (own room)	No right to access College. Disability prevents him from working irregularly	Iran	Refused asylum, waiting for asylum appeal
22	16	LM1	Kaz	Own flat paid for via income support	Pizza delivery, studying to be a car mechanic	Morocco	Subsidiary protection

Interview sample from Italy (no.: 15)

Age	Age on arrival	Code	Name	Current accommodation	Education/employment	Country of origin	Immigration/legal status
24	17	A3	Joshi	Privately renting flat with friends	Studying and working in the arts	Afghanistan	Refugee status
26	13	A4	Erfanullah	Privately renting house with family	Has own food business	Afghanistan	Italian citizen (also family reunification)
17	17	A11	Lika	Government funded adult accommodation centre (shares room with 6 others)	Studying at College	Albania	1 year post-18 leave (waiting for document)

17	17	A12	Lodi	Government funded adult accommodation centre (shares room with 6 others)	Studying at College and via charitable scholarship to vocational institute	Albania	1 year post-18 leave (waiting for document)
20	16	B2	Sibal	Privately renting room with others (shares room with 4 others)	Tailor	Bangladesh	Waiting for 2 year leave based on work contract from business where works
18	15	E1	Mohammed	Homeless. Staying temporarily at government funded accommodation centre for minors	Working informally. Waiting for a contract from fish mongers but needs document for this	Egypt	1 year post-18 leave (waiting for document)
18	17	E2	Giani	Privately renting room with friend	Was working in a fish mongers. Just lost job, now unemployed	Egypt	1 year post-18 leave
18	15	E4	Musta	Homeless. Staying temporarily at government funded accommodation centre for minors	Apprentice at car garage	Egypt	1 year post-18 leave
17(19)	15(17)	G2	Joseph	Government funded adult accommodation centre (shares room with 6 others)	Studying at College. Unemployed.	Gambia	Humanitarian leave
22	17	IC1	Kalal	Privately renting room with friend	Self-employed artist	Ivory Coast	Refugee status
23	17	IC2	Batam	Privately renting flat in rural area	Works in agriculture	Ivory Coast	Subsidiary protection
19	15	L1	Samuel	Homeless. Staying temporarily at government funded accommodation centre for minors	Hotel work	Liberia	Humanitarian leave

20	16	M1	Driss	Homeless. Staying temporarily at government funded accommodation centre for minors	Unemployed	Mali	Subsidiary protection (to shortly be replaced with refugee protection following successful appeal)
18	16	M3	Seda	Government funded adult accommodation centre (shares room with 8 others)	Unemployed	Mali	Asylum seeker. Waiting for asylum decision
18	16	SO1	Omar	Government funded adult accommodation centre (shares room with 8 others)	Unemployed	Somalia	Humanitarian leave

Appendix E: Interview Data (ii)

Italy: Table of Research Participants by County of Origin, Country of Research, Age, Immigration Status (Secure/Insecure), Time in country (>/< 1 year), Key Narrative Genres in which Life Project Recounted (T = Tragedy; E = Epic; Com = Comedy; Con = Confession; F = Fantasy) and Life Projects (S = Safety, W = Work, E = Education, P = Private and Family Life). Total no.=35. These tables relate to the thesis as a whole.

						Narrative Genre					Life Project			
Name	COO	Assigned Code	Age at first interview	Immigration status (secure/insecure)	Time in country (>1 year; < 1 year)	T	E	Com	Con	F	S	W	E	P
Erfanullah	Afghanistan	A4	26	S	>1		X			X	X	X	X	X
Atik	Afghanistan	A2	17	S	>1	X				X	X			
Joshi	Afghanistan	A3	24	S	>1		X	X			X		X	
Pakir	Afghanistan	A1	23	S	<1		X	X	X	X	X	X		
Lika	Albania	A11	17	I	>1	X		X	X	X		X	X	
Lodi	Albania	A12	17	I	<1					X			X	
Shamim	Bangladesh	B1	17	I	>1	X						X	X	
Sibal	Bangladesh	B2	20	S	>1	X	X					X	X	
Mesr	Egypt	E5	17	I	>1	X		X		X		X	X	
Ad	Egypt	E6	16	I	<1	X				X		X		
Giani	Egypt	E2	18	S	>2	X	X			X		X		X
Khalid	Egypt	E8	16	I	>1	X		X				X		
Mohammed	Egypt	E1	18	S/I	>1		X	X				X		X
Mohammed	Egypt	E3	16	I	<1	X			X	X		X		
Musta	Egypt	E4	18	S	>1					X		X	X	
Red	Egypt	E7	17	I	>1	X		X				X	X	
Adam	Eritrea	Et2	16	I	>1			X		X	X		X	
Farage	Eritrea	Et1	15/16	I	>1			X		X	X		X	X
Kino	Gambia	G3	17	I	>1					X	X	X	X	
Lee (2)	Gambia	G1A/B	17	I	>1	X			X	X	X		X	
Joseph	Gambia	G2	17/19	S	>1	X			X		X		X	
Kal (3)	Ghana	Gh1A/B/C	17	I	<1		X				X		X	
Kalal	Ivory Coast	IC1	22	S	>1		X				X		X	
Batam	Ivory Coast	IC2	23	S	<1	X	X			X		X		
Samuel	Liberia	L1	19	I	<1	X				X				
Bira	Mali	M2	17	S	>1					X	X		X	
Driss (2)	Mali	M1A/B	20/21	S/I	>1	X			X		X		X	
Seda	Mali	M3	18	S	>1					X	X		X	
Alee	Morocco	Mo1	21	I	<1	X			X	X			X	
Mohammed	Palestine	P1	15	I	<1	X			X		X	X		X
Yana	Palestine	P2	17/21	I	<1					X	X		X	
Madu	Senegal	S1	17	I	>1	X		X	X	X	X		X	
Bee	Senegal	S3	16	I	>1	X					X		X	
Shady (2)	Senegal	S2	17	I	>1	X			X		X		X	
Omar	Somalia	SO1	18	S	>1	X					X		X	
						21	9	10	10	21	20	16	25	5

England: Table of Research Participants by County of Origin, Country of Research, Age, Immigration Status (Secure/Insecure), Time in country (>/< 1 year), Key Narrative Genres in which Life Project Recounted (T = Tragedy; E = Epic; Com = Comedy; Con = Confession; F = Fantasy) and Life Projects (S = Safety, W = Work, E = Education, P = Private and Family Life). Total no.:23.

						Narrative Genre					Life Project			
Name	COO	Assigned Code	Age	Immigration status (secure/insecure)	Time in country (>1 year; < 1 year)	T	E	Com	Con	F	S	W	E	P
Tabir	Afghanistan	LA2	21	I/S	>1	X	X				X	X		X
Bilal	Afghanistan	LA3	22	I	>1	X					X	X	X	X
Esatullah	Afghanistan	LA4	22	S	>1	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Sadiq	Afghanistan	LA5	17	I	>1	X			X		X		X	
Abil	Afghanistan	LA6	22	I	>1	X					X			
Cal	Afghanistan	LA1	18	I	>1	X					X		X	
Mustafa	Egypt	LEg1	17	I	<1	X			X		X			
Mo	Egypt	LEg2	17	I	>1	X			X		X			
Saad	Egypt	LEg3	18	I	<1	X					X			
Khan	Egypt	LEg4	18	I	<1			X		X	X			
Ali	Eritrea	LE1	18	I	>1					X	X		X	
Omid	Eritrea	LE2	19	I	<1	X			X	X	X		X	
Phil	Eritrea	LE3	17	I	>1			X			X			
Allan	Eritrea	LE4	17	I	>1	X		X	X	X	X		X	
Tanguy	Eritrea	LE5	17	S	>1		X			X	X		X	X
Fo	Eritrea	LE6	16	S	>1		X			X	X		X	
Berhani	Eritrea	LE7	17/18	I	<1					X	X		X	
Solamon	Eritrea	LE9	16	I	<1	X	X	X		X	X			
Tig	Eritrea	LE10	18	S	>1			X		X	X			
Filman (2)	Iran	LI1A/B	19	I	>1	X					X			
Kaz	Morocco	LM1	22	S	>1		X	X				X		
Solyman	Sudan	LS1	17	S	<1					X	X		X	
Simon	Sudan	LS2	18	S	>1					X	X		X	
						13	6	7	5	11	2 2	4	1 2	3

Appendix F: Stakeholder Interview Data

Stakeholder interview data in Italy (no.:25)

Role	Code	Affiliation
Volunteer	V1	Informal volunteer group working with migrants and refugees in transit
Support worker	S1	Private company operating centres of unaccompanied minors
Support worker	S2	Charity operating semi-autonomous accommodation for 16-18 year old unaccompanied minors
Guardian	G1	Guardian with legal responsibility for unaccompanied minors
Lawyer	L1	Lawyer
Lawyer	L2	Lawyer
Support worker	S3	Private company operating centres of unaccompanied minors
Support worker	S4	Private company operating centres of unaccompanied minors
Support worker focused on labour market integration	S5	Private company operating centres of unaccompanied minors
Support worker	S6	Private company operating centres of unaccompanied minors
Manager	M1	Charity operating various accommodation for unaccompanied minors
Support worker	S7	Charity operating semi-autonomous accommodation for 16-18 year old unaccompanied minors
Guardian	G2	Guardian with legal responsibility for unaccompanied minors and lawyer
Lawyer	L3	Law firm working on migration
Member of Parliament	P1	Parliament
Support worker	S7 and S8	Private company operating centres of unaccompanied minors
Responsible for unaccompanied minors	P2	Ministry of the Interior
Volunteer	V2	Informal volunteer group working with migrants and refugees in transit
Support worker focused on labour market integration	S9	Charity operating accommodation for adults including former unaccompanied minors
Support worker	S10	Charity operating various accommodation for unaccompanied minors
Support worker	S11	Charity operating various accommodation for unaccompanied minors
Support worker	S12	Charity operating various accommodation for unaccompanied minors
Support worker	S13	Charity operating various accommodation for unaccompanied minors aged 16 and under
Volunteer and Eritrean elder/facilitator	V3	Informal volunteer group working with migrants and refugees in transit

Stakeholder interview data in England (no.:14)

(those marked light green were conducted by the researcher. The others were derived from the ESRC Becoming Adult research project to which this PhD was linked through a grant linked studentship – see Introduction).

Role	Code	Affiliation
Youth worker	Q1	Youth club working with migrants and refugees
Youth worker	L1	Charity operating centres of unaccompanied minors
Policy lead	Z1	Local authority
Support worker	S1 and S2	NGO working with unaccompanied young migrants and refugees (among other youth)
Social worker	K2	Local authority
Support worker	I1	Homelessness charity working with unaccompanied young migrants and refugees (among other youth)
Lawyer	O1	Law firm working on migration
Support worker	K4	Charity operating centres of unaccompanied minors
Support worker	K7	Social enterprise supporting community volunteering with unaccompanied youth
Support worker	K10	Charity operating centres of unaccompanied minors
Head of care for unaccompanied minors	J1	Educational Institution
Social worker	J6	Local authority
Mental health worker	K3	Local authority
Charity worker	z4	Charity supporting unaccompanied migrant and refugee youth

Appendix G: Example of Arts-based Method: (i) Museum of Self: Lika



Accompanying narration: I drew here my favorite things – I love these things. And I miss some of them – my house in Albania, my brother – he is not with me now.

Here is a football. Football is my favourite sport. And I love it – I like very much when I play with other guys. In reality that is, not on the Playstation! I'm quite good.

Other things here, well. Headphones. I like to listen to music. When you are going through bad times, the only way to do something is to listen to music, to destress, relax. I listen to pop music or, I don't know the name in English, in Greek it's laika.

There, that's my brother. I have two siblings, one brother and one sister. One sister from my father's side but I was with my brother for 16 years. It's been three or four months since I left and I haven't seen him. I haven't seen him for five months and I miss him. He's two years younger. I was talking to him yesterday. In Greece the time was 1 a.m. and we were talking for one hour. Here it was midnight.

I miss my house in Albania – there - because my grandmother and my grandfather are there and I miss them because I was nine years old when I left Albania. I went to Albania four months ago but I stayed only a little time, not much. And I will go again one day, I don't know when, maybe when I am 18.

Here, this is the flag of Albania. In Albania we lived with my grandmother for six years as my mother and father were working in Greece so my grandmother was looking after us. I was living with her. I can talk to her now on the phone or on Skype but my cousin there who has internet spent it all a few days ago so I couldn't talk with her this week.

There, that's my house where I lived when I was in Greece. When I was in Greece we went to the beach. It's a very beautiful country. I like Greece.

The other things are not so important or interesting...

There's a toy from when I was young. This toy I think, one or two years I played with it because then I lost it, I don't know how I lost it... Ah I remember now, my mother gave it to a little girl because she didn't, well actually she had toys, so I don't know why my mother gave it to her! I was really angry! And she gave her other toys too, not just this. It was this and one monkey and I was always playing with that with my brother and she gave it to the little girl. I was angry with my mother, very much – why did she give it away?

This is a Playstation – I had a Playstation from 2009 to 2015, then mum broke it! Ugh. We were playing with it, me and my brother. When we had internet we played online games – it was a Playstation 3 and we had too many choices of games to play! We played Minecraft all day and my mother, when she came home from work, from her job, she always took the cord from the Playstation and pulled it out and one day it stopped working. When you turned it on it worked but two minutes later it went blank and didn't show anything, so you couldn't play after that. So now it's broken. Now I play games on my phone, all day. Because I don't have anything else to do and I have internet access all day. I play an online game with other guys from Greece. And I like it. It's a good way to stay in touch. And I talk to all my friends from Greece and Albania. I have things to do, but I get bored and I prefer playing with my phone. My mum tried to break it in Greece! I bought the phone with my money for my birthday in Greece – a present from me to me! I've had it for one year now.

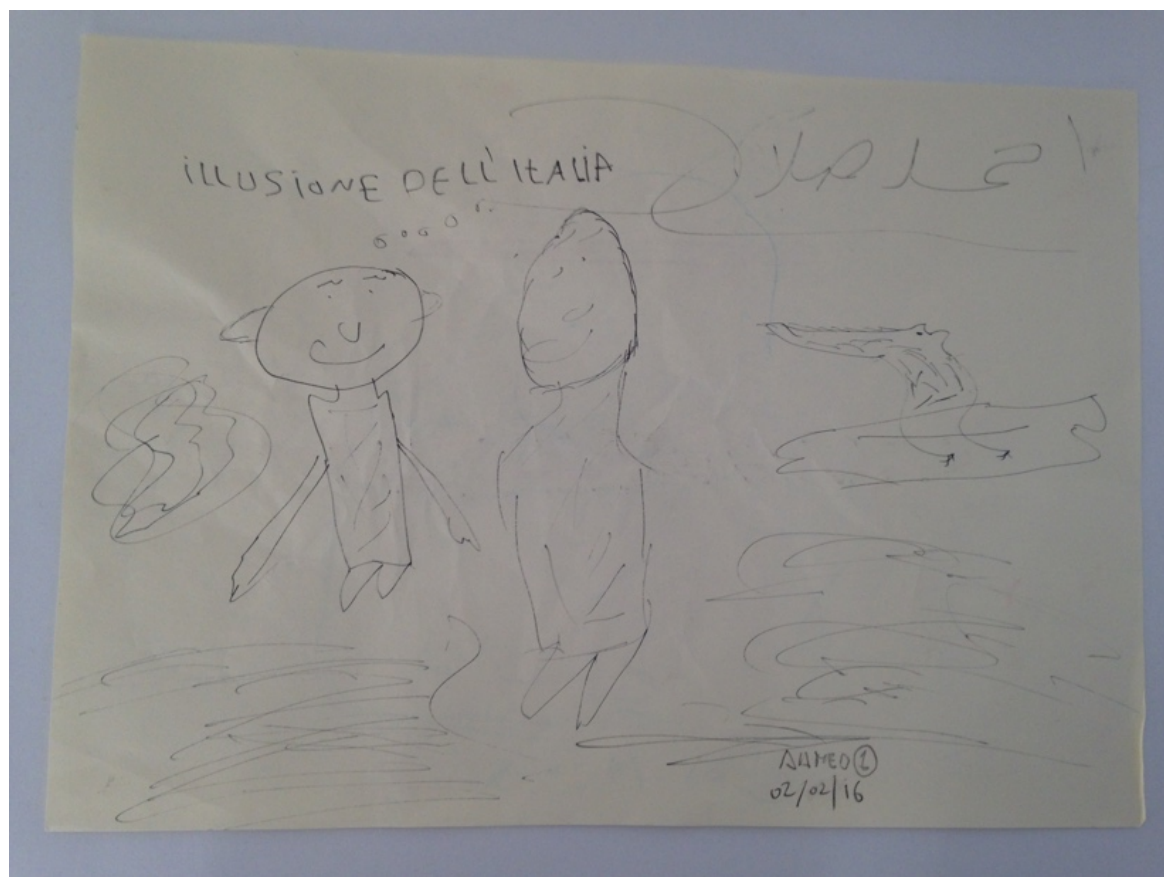
Appendix H: Example of Arts-based Method: (ii) ‘Transformation’: Mesr’s Doors



Accompanying narrative (English translation): ‘Open Doors’ – this object is a shield but it makes me think of a door. Doors make me think of home. At my friends’ houses the doors are always open. These doors represent me, Mesr, and my friends Ahmed and Manzur. I wrote our names here on the doors in Arabic.

Italian original: ‘Porte Aperte’ - Questo oggetto è uno schiudo ma mi fa pensare ad una porta. La porta mi fa pensare alla casa. Alle case dei miei amici le porte sono sempre aperte. Queste porte rappresentano io, Mesr, ed i miei amici Ahmed e Manzur. Ho scritto i nostri nomi sulle porte in arabo.

Appendix I: Example of Arts-based method: (iii) Drawing: ‘The Illusion of Italy’



Accompanying narrative (English translation): This is me and my cousin. He's in Italy and I'm in Egypt and we're talking on the phone. I ask him, 'so how's Italy?' and he says 'Good. In Italy there's work, there's money, there's everything you could want. You have to come to Italy!' Then I come to Italy and Italy isn't like this. This picture *tells this story* (own italics).

(Italian original) *Sono io e mio cugino, lui è in Italia e io sono in Egitto e parliamo al telefono. Gli chiedo 'come va Italia?' e lui mi dice 'Bene. In Italia c'è lavoro, c'è soldi, c'è tutto. Devi venire in Italia!' Poi vengo in Italia e Italia non è così. Quest'immagine racconta questa storia.*

Appendix J: Consent Form for Research Participants

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY AND INTERVENTION
Barnett House, 32 Wellington Square,
Oxford, OX1 2ER, United Kingdom
www.spi.ox.ac.uk



RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

I understand that the purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of young migrants in the UK and Italy who arrived as minors.	☐
I understand that the research is being conducted by Jennifer Allsopp, a DPhil student at the University of Oxford and I am aware that I can contact her using the following contact details (jenny.allsopp@spi.ox.ac.uk).	☐
I have had a chance to ask any questions and know that I can ask questions at any time.	☐
I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the University of Oxford Central Research Ethics Committee	☐
I understand that i) anything I say will be kept in a safe place, ii) it will not be shown to anyone except Jennifer Allsopp and members of the 'Becoming Adult' research team iii) nobody will be able to identify me in the research.	☐
I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason .	☐
I agree to have the interview recorded (to be checked at each interview).	☐
I understand that all the information I provide during the interviews will be made anonymous and stored in a password protected place. I understand that the researcher will remove my name and any information which could identify me.	☐
I understand that this research will be published as a thesis and reports, presentations and academic publications.	☐
I know how to raise concerns about the research or make a by contacting Dr Elaine Chase (Elaine.chase@spi.ox.ac.uk) in the first instance then the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk)	☐

Signed: _____ (Participant) Date: _____

Printed name: _____

(Or) Verbal consent noted _____ (on behalf of participant)

Signed: _____ (Researcher) Date: _____

Printed name _____

Appendix K: Example Memorandum of Understanding with Host Organisation

Draft Terms of Reference between [host organisation] and Jennifer Allsopp

These Terms of Reference lay out the terms of collaboration between [host organisation] and Jennifer Allsopp in the context of the 'Becoming Adult' research project.

1. The purpose of the research is to explore the experiences of young migrants in the UK and Italy who arrived as minors, in particular in relation to their interactions with statutory and non-statutory forms of welfare and how this influences their wellbeing, decision-making and trajectories.
2. Jennifer's research is centered around interviews with 40 young people in Rome and Leicester (aged 16-25) and ethnographies of two support organizations in these sites.
3. [host organisation] consents to Jennifer Allsopp acting as a participant observer in one of its weekly support clubs for unaccompanied young people and in its office one day a week in an administrative support capacity for a period of 8 months.
4. [host organisation] will also support Jennifer in identifying young people for interviews.
5. **The safety and wellbeing of the young people will be the primary concern at the all times. Jennifer will comply with [host organisation]'s internal protocols and research ethics including safeguarding the anonymity of the young people at all times.** If there is any indication that Jennifer's presence is disrupting the running of [host organisation]'s activities (such as, for example, a drop in attendance linked to Jennifer's presence), Jennifer's participation will be terminated.
6. If, at any time, Jennifer is concerned about a young person's wellbeing or perceives a risk of harm to the young person or to others she will contact [name of responsible person].
7. This research project – including Jennifer's participation in [host organisation]'s activities – has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the University of Oxford Central Research Ethics Committee.
8. All notes collected by Jennifer will i) be kept in a safe place, ii) will not be shown to anyone outside of the research project iii) nobody will be able to identify any participants in the research.
9. All notes will be made anonymous and stored in a password protected place. Jennifer will remove names and any information which could identify young people linked to [host organisation].
10. This research will be published as a thesis and reports, presentations and academic publications.
11. [host organisation] can raise concerns about the research or Jennifer's participation at any time by contacting Dr Elaine Chase (Elaine.chase@spi.ox.ac.uk) in the first instance then the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

Date:

Signed:

Jennifer Allsopp, PhD Candidate, Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford

Date:

Signed:

Director, [host organisation]

Appendix L: Example Topic Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY AND INTERVENTION

Barnett House, 32 Wellington Square,
Oxford, OX1 2ER, United Kingdom
www.spi.ox.ac.uk



Topic Guide 'Welfare and wellbeing'

Since arriving in the UK/Italy

Since arriving situation regarding:

- Legal status
- Accommodation and support
- Education
- Health
- Perceptions – how different to home country? What is good/ bad about home country/UK or Italy?

Transitions/Adulthood

- Experience of turning 18 / 21 years old/other important transitions
- Ideas about 'adulthood' and meanings and associations (in country of origin; in the UK/Italy; in the context of your life now) ; how does being an 'adult' differ from being a 'child' in these different contexts
- Gender
- Other important changes/transitions in life
- Things that were good about these transitions; things that were difficult

Social relationships and support

- **Close friends:** How did you meet them? Where are they from? Did you know anyone in the UK/Italy before you came here? Are some/all of your friends in a similar situation regarding immigration status?
- **What other people are important in your life:** key persons of support/persons you trust/persons you go to when you need help
- **Family members** in the UK/Italy and elsewhere
- **What you do with your friends** (activities/places)
- **Affiliation to groups** (sport/church activities/community organisations/other group: nature of affiliation; involvement in activities; perceived benefits/drawbacks)
- **Transnational links/ communication** with country of origin/other countries – how do you stay in touch/ how often?
- Do you know people in other parts of Europe? What is your impression of their lives?
- Other sources of support
- Where do you get information about resources/sources of support?
- What/who shapes your decision making?

Education (if applicable)

- **School/ college/vocational training. university experience:** Past and present
- **How did you find the teachers?** (examples and situations of perceived discrimination and misunderstanding, or positive encounters with teachers)
- **How is your relationship with your schoolmates?** Do you get along? Do you have friends at school/college/university?

Work (if applicable)

- **Work experience:** where do you work, workload, how did you find your job? Things you like and you don't like about your job
- **How much do you get paid for your work?** Does it feel fair?
- **Type of contract/irregular work**
- **Who are the other people working with you?** (e.g. undocumented migrants?)

Health and wellbeing

- **What it means to be 'well'**
- **What sort of things make you feel well and happy; what things make you feel unwell or unhappy?** (ie getting at physical and emotional health).
- **Coping strategies:** what do you do when you feel anxious/stressed/etc? Is there anything that helps?

Journey

- Why left
- How left
- Experience of journey – how long, who with?

Hopes and aspirations

- Dreams/ hopes/ plans for the future
- What needs to happen to carry out your plans?
- Things/people facilitating plans; people/things getting in the way
- Where you see yourself in the future
- People and/or things that influence the decisions you make about your future
- Expectations of people around you for your future (family; peers; institutions; school)?
- Feelings of belonging and integration

Needs and suggestions

- Things that would make life easier
- What you might say to a politician about what should change
- Anything else you want to say/talk about