

Life Planning and Habitus: Opportunities and Constraints Among Unaccompanied Young Refugees in Sweden

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DOI: 10.1177/1103308820966833
journals.sagepub.com/home/youPhilip Lalander¹ and Marcus Herz¹ 

Abstract

The article examines how unaccompanied young refugees in Sweden relate to and talk about their everyday lives and life plans during a time of transition from childhood to adulthood. We regard them as navigators and emotional beings embodying social situations, relationships and sentiments in their habitus throughout their lives affecting their life plans and acting to build capital in social fields. Their narratives show that they all have a life plan. However, disruptions and adjustments of life plans occur, often related to their birth families, deeply embodied in their habitus, to their everyday life, but also to socio-economic and political contexts both globally and locally. Their position as young ‘unaccompanied minors’ is fragile when it comes to realizing future goals. A stable social and economic structure, *stability capital*, appears to contribute to possibilities of adapting to or maintaining sustainable life plans.

Keywords

Life plan, unaccompanied children, migration, transition, habitus, capital, social fields

Between 2011 and 2016, approximately 50,000 ‘unaccompanied minors’ entered Sweden (Migrationsverket, 2016a). Entering Sweden is the beginning of a long waiting period complete with meetings and interviews with a plethora of governmental officials. Eventually, some receive a permanent residency permit. Throughout this maze of waiting periods, since most of them are in their upper teens, the minors are expected to make their transition from childhood to adulthood (cf. Wade, 2011). This transition means they are expected to make plans for their future. In the present

¹ Department of Social Work, Malmö University, Malmö, Sweden.

Corresponding author:

Marcus Herz, Department of Social Work, Malmö University, 205 06 Malmö, Sweden.
E-mail: marcus.herz@mau.se

article, we meet some of these young people who shared opportunities and constraints within their everyday lives and life plans with us. Since most of them considered the term ‘unaccompanied’ as being constraining and problematic (Herz & Lalander, 2017), we have chosen to use quotation marks to clarify it as being a categorization made by others denoting a disparate group of young people.

Sweden has long been considered one of the most generous European nations when it comes to granting asylum. However, during the empirical period addressed in this study (2015–2017), Swedish immigration laws were rigorously tightened. Restrictions such as closed borders and allowance of mainly temporary residency, if any, have meant that ‘unaccompanied’ minors are rarely allowed permanent residency. The possibility for family reunification has declined, and stricter maintenance requirements have been introduced demanding that they support themselves and their family members as well (Migrationsverket, 2016b). In addition, another comprehensive change during recent decades has been the neoliberal adaptation of the Swedish welfare state. Research points towards consequences such as increased social inequality, including racism, affecting the transitions of young people into adulthood (Dahlstedt & Ekholm, 2017).

Previous studies on ‘unaccompanied’ young refugees in Europe have focused on reception (Stretmo, 2014; Wernesjö, 2011) and the individuals’ human rights for asylum (Lundberg, 2011). Psychosocial health among ‘unaccompanied’ minors has received substantial attention in the research (Groark et al., 2011). Lately, there has been a greater interest in the everyday life of ‘unaccompanied’ young individuals, with studies taking either a qualitative or a more ethnographic approach (see Kohli, 2006; Wernesjö, 2011). Building on that tradition, we claim that previous research nonetheless often lacks a long-term ethnographic focus on the everyday lives of ‘unaccompanied’ individuals and on the possible changes and stability that mark their lives over time.

We use empirical material from our field study among 20 ‘unaccompanied’ young refugees. We regard these young people as *navigators* who take out new coordinates and change course as they travel through life. We also see them as emotional beings having embodied social situations, relationships and sentiments in their habitus throughout their lives as they move and navigate between and within different positions and fields (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus, explained in more detail later, is a term used to capture how individuals decode and experience themselves and act in relation to the world around them (Bourdieu, 2000). Thus, habitus is crucial regarding life planning. To be able to capture how the young people themselves approach the transition from childhood to adulthood, we focus on how they make plans for their future life. Life planning should not be understood as a rational and linear way of thought staking out a person’s future life. Life plans are continuously shaped, reshaped and adjusted throughout the life’s course (Johansson & Hammarén, 2010) in a continuous interplay between: (a) *habitus*—including individual feelings, ambitions and self-images; (b) the *capital*—especially economic and cultural, developed within; and (c) different *social fields* and *external structures* that affect actors’ power and possibilities to plan for their life and succeed in reaching their goals (Bourdieu, 2000).

Our research approach involved recurrent interviews and meetings with the participants during a period of 2 years. Our approach has been inspired by ethnographic

studies (see Bourgois, 1995/2003) where the researcher sees participants as teachers who provide knowledge about their dynamic, changing and ambiguous lives and their interconnectedness with social structures, including social fields, that permeate habitus (and thus agency) and contribute to the development of capital. Our research design also included regular follow-up interviews and meetings, at different times and often at different places, which have given us the opportunity to analyse how the informants navigate their life over time in relation to their past, present and future.

In this article, the aim is to examine how ‘unaccompanied’ young refugees with a permanent residence permit in Sweden relate to and talk about their everyday lives and their life plans during their transition to adulthood. During our 2 years of data gathering, their lives have changed, as have their plans and their habitus.

Life Plans During the Transition into Adulthood

As mentioned, our point of departure is that the participating young people are at a point in life where they are expected to make plans for their transition into adulthood (cf. Wade, 2011). This transition and these plans for their future, we argue, are continuously negotiated by the young people in relation to ‘specific social, political and economic circumstances and processes’ (Wyn & White, 1998, p. 25).

The work of Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992), among others, brought young people’s life planning during ‘late modernity’ into focus. They argued that life planning is connected to the problems of living in an environment characterized by a heightened awareness of risks and widespread reflexivity and individualization regarding self-identity in late-modern societies (cf. Adams, 2006). In other words, young people are exposed to ‘new’ challenges regarding the practice of life planning because of modern society’s inherent variability, uncertainty and demand for continuous risk management and identity construction. This is not to say that life plans are any less constructed, but that they appear more provisional and fragile than before (Anderson et al., 2002), and that knowledge about the context in which plans are made and transformed is essential if we want to understand how young people think about their future (Devadason, 2008).

We assume that young people, in general, live with uncertainty as a necessary condition of late-modern or postmodern society and that the future is not easy to predict. We also assume that some young people face more challenges than others do in these neoliberal times due to global inequality regimes related to different types of capital, such as education and economic conditions. Commonly, these young people live in regions and parts of the world where opportunities and possibilities to make and pursue life plans are restricted due to survival reasons and, thus, there are limited chances of social mobility (Bauman, 2011). Because of their restricted acting space, these people may experience more risks in life than may people with allowances that are more generous. Security in life and realization of life plans are intimately intertwined with economic and social positioning (Bauman, 2011).

Life planning and the possibility of sticking to the plan depend on the ways habitus has been, and continues to be, shaped. We argue that individuals are strongly intertwined with social circumstances and structures linking them to both history and the present. Habitus represents a ‘product of history’ that ‘produces individual

and collective practices...’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). Thus, habitus ‘...is a sediment of past activity that remains alive in the present in the form of the structures of the corporeal schema; shaping perception, conception, deliberation, emotion and action’ (Crossley, 2001, p. 125). However, habitus is not coherent and unified. Rather, it represents different degrees of integration and tension between the past and more recent situations and circumstances in life (see Bourdieu, 2000). Thus, habitus refers to something complex and multi-layered—something actors use while experiencing or constructing the world around them and when reflecting over both history and the future.

Habitus and its development are intricately connected to participation in social fields. Bourdieu (2000, p. 152) writes: ‘The body is in the social world, but the social world is in the body [...] The very structures of the world are present in the structures (or, to put it better, the cognitive schemes) that agents implement to understand it’. When people grow up, their bodies are socialized to be able to handle the world they live in (Bourdieu, 2000), to create a balance between position in the field and habitus (Bourdieu, 2000). If this balance does not exist, or if an agent experiences difficulties living up to the demands of a field, one may speak about a ‘mismatch’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 159ff), meaning that habitus is not equipped to deal with the social life within the field (c.f. Adams, 2006; Ingram, 2011). Bourdieu (2000, p. 157) writes that the fit between habitus and field ‘...is never perfect and there are always some agents “out of limb”, displaced, out of place and ill at ease’. Nevertheless, habitus ‘... change[s] constantly in response to efforts to adjust to fields and to new experiences. Dispositions within habitus are subject to a kind of permanent revision, but one which is never radical, because it works on the bases of the premises established in the previous state’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 161; cf. Reay, 2010). This relative elasticity of the habitus means that people who were socialized in certain fields may adapt to new fields. However, some dispositions, or combinations of dispositions, may be harder to change than others. It may also, according to Nicola Ingram’s (2011) Bourdieu-inspired research on working-class boys and their encounters with fields of education, imply that agents’ habitus may become shattered between ‘the field of origin’ (2011, p. 289) and new fields with demands other than those of this field of origin.

Bourdieu also uses the concept of *capital* to explain the dynamics of power in different fields and society in general. In *Distinction*, he presents the following formula: ‘(Habitus x Capital + Field = Practice’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101, cf. Reay, 2010, p. 435). A high volume of respected (social, cultural and economic) capital within a field makes individual progress possible. There is an interplay between habitus and capital, since an agent (for the field) with a well-equipped habitus may be skilled (have ‘a feel for the game’) when it comes to developing more capital.

The concepts discussed above will be used to analyse the life of four ‘unaccompanied’ young refugees who arrived in Sweden between 2012 and 2014. They were newcomers to the Swedish society, with their habitus having developed in other parts of the world, having different social worlds and intersections of fields. Being an ‘unaccompanied’ young refugee means, literally, that one leaves a particular familiar social and economic environment (set of fields or intersections of fields) that has had a significant impact on one’s habitus. Migration may, thus, serve as a habitus-changing practice (Wacquant, 2016), creating both difficulties to

adapt to new fields and opportunities for developing habitus and capital in those new social fields.

Methodology

The backgrounds of the participants cover a variety of experiences and include different genders, nationalities, ages, classes, living conditions and current situations. However, as a group, they correspond to general patterns of migration to Sweden. People originating from Afghanistan (10 participants) and Somalia (4) were nationally over-represented at the time. Thus, they are also over-represented in this study. However, some participants originate from Ethiopia (1), Pakistan (2), Iran (1) and Syria (2). The participants are between 15 and 22 years of age and have been in Sweden for 1–5 years. Some live with foster parents or in residential care homes, while others live by themselves or have reunited with their biological families. Some of them study, while others are working. In terms of gender, our study corresponds to the proportion of girls arriving as ‘unaccompanied’ to Sweden at the time our project started; at that time, approximately 1 in 10 young refugees was a girl. In the present study, one young woman participated over a 2-year period, and two young women were recruited later in the process. We have approached our participants using different sources and strategies to be able to capture a variety of experiences. The participants have been recruited through schools, residential care homes, organizations, social workers and previous contacts.

We have put considerable effort into not breaching the trust granted to us by these young people. Because of their age and possible language difficulties, we thoroughly explained and continuously discussed the conditions for their participation. Since many of the participants have experiences of being documented and screened by authorities, we have chosen to work with iterative consent. Iterative consent means that researchers and participants work together through continuous dialogue to negotiate the conditions of participation in the project and the roles of all involved parts, rather than signing documents of agreement (Mackenzie et al., 2007). The project group has met at least once a month, sharing experiences and discussing ethical dilemmas. Since the participants are 15 years or older, no permission from their parents or legal guardians was necessary according to Swedish law. The study has been approved by the ethical review board in Lund (reg. no. 2014/482).

Most interviews and observations have been recorded and transcribed in detail by the authors. Some observations and informal conversations have been captured in observation notes. All names and places have been anonymized. We have read all the material, taken notes and extracted themes that have appeared in the material. We have searched for patterns, nuances and contradictions (Kvale, 2007). Embedded in the analysis is an ambition to understand how life plans are shaped and modified in relation to habitus, capital and the possible encounters within social fields. We have used theoretical considerations in selecting four cases from the original sample of 20 young people. We have chosen these four cases because they represent different aspects of how habitus and social positioning affect young people’s life plans, as well as how changes in habitus can challenge and disrupt such plans.

Life Planning, Disruption and Change

Chuhan's Story About Precarious Lives

I know that I fight for my mother. That makes me feel good. (Chuhan)

Chuhan, now 20 years old, came to Sweden from Iran a few years earlier and lived in a transit home while being investigated by the Swedish migration agency. They discovered that he had left fingerprints in another European country and that he should be deported to apply for asylum there. Chuhan decided to hide from the Swedish authorities for 18 months and then reapply for asylum. During this psychologically challenging period, he moved around, was short of money and had constant sleeping problems forcing him to use both tranquilizers and sleeping pills. His plan was focused on survival and staying in Sweden. He was not able to participate in the Swedish society, nor develop capital to experience progress in life. He had to put his 'life on pause' (Fontanari, 2017). Chuhan managed to carry on thanks to a voluntary organization. After reapplying, with support from the organization, he was granted permanent residency and could in earnest start planning for his future in Sweden. In early 2015, when Paula from our research group met him, he told her about the importance of studying and education to create a good life. However, later in the same year, Chuhan called Paula and told her that 'the best has happened [...] I've found my mom'. He explained how his recovered relationship with his mother gave him a lot of 'energy' to fight, to make it in Sweden. Chuhan later clarified that his mother was impoverished and had a severe heart problem and that he wanted to bring his mother to Sweden to care for her, as she once had cared for him. When he told us about his mother's situation, it appeared as if he had no choice but to care for her and take her to Sweden. This situation is in line with how Bourdieu (2000, p. 138) writes about habitus as 'inscribed in their bodies by past experiences'. Chuhan's childhood created this strong bond between him and his mother, a bond so firmly inscribed in habitus that he immediately knew that he—out of necessity—must care for her and try to bring her to him. Bourdieu (2000, p. 138) writes that this type of action where habitus reacts to a stimulus or a situation (in our case, the mother's presence) takes place '...without any explicit definition of ends or rational calculation of means...'. Out of necessity and strong affection, this type of action is carried on beyond life planning, since planning involves analysis and calculation. Having decided to bring her to Sweden, Chuhan started planning for how he would act to succeed with this goal. He knew that economic capital was central, and to get money, he must work hard.

A few months later, Chuhan called Paula to tell her that he now worked at a store. He asked if she wanted to come to visit and see his new job, and a few hours later, Paula stepped into the store and saw Chuhan standing behind the counter. He gave Paula a big smile as she entered and told her that he worked from 9 AM until 11 PM, 7 days a week. Chuhan explained:

I was supposed to study this year, but I can't since I must bring my mother. She's completely alone, and you know the rules from the Migration office. You must have an income, after tax, it must be 18.000 (approx. 1800 Euro). And it's difficult to get a job in this city, so I've chosen to work in this store. It's shit time but also fun. (Chuhan)

The change in Chuhan's life plan was far-reaching. Obviously, the Swedish legislation added to the pressure on Chuhan, who could not avoid caring and planning for the mother (Migrationsverket, 2016b). As a refugee in a nation-state context, he was forced to submit to political decisions that led to the postponement of his studies. These studies could have provided him with important capital development. In addition, it affected his life in many other ways. One consequence was that his body felt worn: 'My body can't take it. But I've got no other choice. I must'.

Worriedly, Paula asked him if he could ask to have one day off per week. Chuhan explained that he was not forced to work 7 days a week but that there was tough competition for this kind of work and that he risked losing money if he said no to 1 day. Chuhan was involved in *precarious work* (Standing, 2011), which lacks security and is 'reserved' for people with low (or unrecognized) education and a fragile financial situation. He had neither the time nor the energy to keep on going to school and to develop the capital that education could bring.

Thus, Chuhan's efforts to plan his life were affected by unequal structures on a global scale. He was being steered towards precarious work due to his and his mother's fragile life situation. He said: 'I don't care what job it is. Only that it's a job'. Instead of dreaming about an education that might lead to an increased volume of cultural capital and better chances, in the long run, he now presented a short-term plan where education was not an option. Because he was sending money to his mother, his financial situation appeared strained. He constantly searched for possible solutions to fix this shortage. He told Paula that he had thought about doing what he called 'shit stuff' and explained that he would be able to earn a lot of quick money if he delivered a large number of prescription drugs to another city in Sweden.

As Bauman (2011) puts it, poor people face more risks than wealthy people do. Chuhan's situation was so stressed that he considered an illegal act. He considered it even though it could further reduce his future opportunities and nullify his attempts to pursue his life plan and a stable economic situation together with his mother. The re-entrance of Chuhan's mother and his memories of her once taking care of him exemplify how habitus, in terms of embodied childhood experiences, can affect immediate actions as well as the current life plan.

Jordan and His Father

I prioritise my education now, but life is hard. But you must be able to stand it, as my dad says. (Jordan)

At the onset of this research project, Jordan had been in Sweden for 2 years and had just started his penultimate year of junior high school. He was born in Afghanistan and 15 years old when we first met him. Jordan was strongly motivated throughout his studies and managed to be at the same level as average 'Swedish' students of his age, in all subjects. When Philip met him in June 2017, it was evident that he was proud of this and his good grades. He told Philip about his studies: 'It's the present that's crucial for the future. Knowledge is power'. He explained that he had had a set purpose even before he fled to Sweden. This purpose involved learning Swedish, passing junior high school, qualifying for secondary school, studying at university and finally gaining a job and a steady income. Thus, he had a life plan that included an obvious development of educational capital and a clear advancement in life.

Jordan's background differs from Chuhan's in that he grew up in a well-educated family with a stable financial situation, his father being a dentist and his mother an English teacher. He declared to us that one of his goals was to follow his father, to become a dentist. This goal may have been influenced by his habitus and field of origin, being realistic and something to believe in and available to 'people like him' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Reay, 2010). After a year, however, he changed his focus towards social science. He told this to Philip, who on Jordan's birthday gave him a book on social psychology. Later, Jordan used the book in school, impressing his teachers. We believe that this increased Jordan's academic self-confidence, his ability to achieve and to take a position in the field as a smart and ambitious pupil. Although slightly altered, his goal was still to pursue academic studies. Thus, his class habitus was in good accord with the Swedish school and this path to the future.

However, Jordan also told us how he did not want his classmates (a majority of them with a 'Swedish background') to know about him being an 'unaccompanied minor'. He thought that they would consider him strange, as a person with problems, and not as an equal classmate. This awareness may have made his performance as a well-performing pupil even more important to 'pass' (see Goffman, 1963/1990) as an ordinary participant in the field.

Jordan had some other capital advantages when it came to realizing a long-term plan. He could speak English, as his parents had provided for private English classes for him. His English skills made it easier for him to communicate with 'Swedes' from the start. He could socialize with others and partake in the rituals of everyday life. He even got a Swedish-speaking best friend despite speaking limited Swedish, which helped him to develop his language and understanding of the Swedish society even more. His skills in one language (English) enabled him to generate skills in another language (Swedish) and, thus, to develop more capital and academic self-confidence.

Jordan's situation, with respect to his class habitus, skills in English and parents' stable financial situation, placed him in a relatively good position compared to Chuhan, who has a poor and unhealthy mother. Jordan did not need to send money to his parents and could almost exclusively focus on school. The financial situation of his family made it possible for him to invest his time in studies rather than on finding low-paid jobs. This security gave his studies the stability that many others lack. However, Jordan also says that he hopes to get a good job before something happens to his parents as they get old, causing their financial situation to change, thus touching upon the fragility of life. There is no welfare system catering to sick and old people where his parents live. Such circumstances make the conditions of his and many other 'unaccompanied' young refugees' lives different in comparison to those of the lives of many 'middle-class' young 'Swedes' who, after secondary school and before university, often are able to live up to late-modernity ideals (cf. Giddens, 1991) that promote 'finding' oneself and investing in one's life projects and identity work (Elsrud, 2004). Interpreted through Jordan's habitus, harbouring sediments from growing up in a society with a weak welfare system, time is limited. He is clearly aware of the importance of studying hard and not wasting any time.

The narratives of Jordan and Chuhan demonstrate the interconnection between habitus, types and amounts of capital, and relations in other parts of the world. They also exemplify how structures of inequality and social class can create fragility in

everyday life and life planning. In both cases, habitus, including strong embodied emotional bonds, affects the actor's ongoing life plans. However, the effects may differ based on their different class backgrounds and their biological families' holding of capital. This capital is a prerequisite for the development of other types of capital, preparing them for their future.

Saleh's Disruptions from a Clear Path

I've tried to create what I want, and I believe I finally have what I wanted. (Saleh)

When Saleh was 16 years old, he lived at a residential care home with a large group of boys. He had fled Iran and had received his permit to stay in Sweden. Saleh found the residential care home where he was staying stressful and messy. Many boys were living there, and the place had a high turnover of staff. Saleh felt that these living conditions affected his school performance and his ability to do homework. He wanted to be placed in a family home instead.

Later, when Marcus met with Saleh, now 17, he had been able to move in with a family. The urgency of the situation at the residential care home had caused Saleh to take rather extreme measures, leaving the care home without permission from his social worker who thought it would be too expensive to have him living with a family. He moved in with the family, and after a couple of weeks, the residential care home and his social worker felt it was best for him to remain with the family. Saleh was happy. He finally had a family and peace and quiet and could move on towards the future according to his plans. Saleh told us that this family was good to him and that they often discussed different academic or philosophic themes. This new well-educated middle-class family meant new influences, security and care for Saleh. As such, they could contribute to the development of Saleh's habitus and his development of capital, preparing him for his future and the different fields it might include.

Ten months later, Saleh's younger brother also fled Iran. He called Saleh on the phone because he was stuck with a friend in Germany and needed help. Like Chuhan and his mother, the social bond with his brother was intimately embedded in Saleh's habitus and emotional life. This situation challenged and disturbed Saleh's life plan, and he needed to re-prioritize, at least in the short run. He talked to his birth parents and his foster parents for advice; they did not push him in any direction, but Saleh *felt* that he could not leave his brother alone in Germany. This situation is reminiscent of that of Chuhan, who was helping his mother due to their strong incorporated and emotional bond. It was merely something that had to be done, so Saleh left for Germany. When he arrived, he bought his brother and his brother's friend train tickets, and they all got on a train to Denmark. Right after it crossed the Danish border, border agents entered the train. They walked up to Saleh and his brother and asked them for identity (ID) cards and wanted to know who had paid for the tickets. At that stage, Sweden had toughened its migration policies and closed its border to Denmark. In turn, Denmark had toughened its attitude towards refugees with regular border controls and stricter laws. The practically almost-impenetrable borders between European countries affected Saleh's and his brother's possible movements and led to Saleh being arrested and having to spend the night

in jail. The situation exemplifies that being a young migrant may involve risks later in life that rarely befall other young people. The continuous fragility of friends and families that is deeply embedded in habitus can urge people to act even during risky circumstances.

When Saleh was released, it dawned on him what had happened.

I was really scared. I was like: ‘What have I done?’ Really worried [...] [But] I had to do it. I had no other choice. My brother’s there, he had no money, and he called me a couple of times. I had to do it.

Saleh knew this could have consequences for his future, but just like Chuhan, he ‘had to do it’. His habitus involved tensions between the past, represented by his brother, and the present, his plans and now also a possible trial and sentence. Finally came Saleh’s day in court. He was fined and banned from entering Denmark for 6 years. He was relieved by the outcome: ‘It was tough, but it went well, now it’s over. It actually feels good’. Nowadays, his brother resides with the same family as Saleh, with the decision on his asylum application pending.

From the beginning, Saleh had a clear picture of what he wanted in life. This certainty was evident in his purposefulness when he moved from the residential care home to his current family and in his performances in school and at work. He wanted a stable life to make it easier for him to invest time and focus in school, progressing in life, developing capital, preparing himself for entering fields of competition. However, his life plan was challenged due to a strong, embodied social bond with his brother. The vulnerability of family members living in other places tends to make itself felt in everyday life in Sweden.

Nonetheless, there is also a difference between Saleh’s case and the situation of many others. Even if the disruptions in his life plan were far-reaching in many respects—being arrested and prosecuted, risking imprisonment—they do not seem to have affected his everyday life or future life plans as much as might be expected. What distinguishes Saleh from many others is his family in Sweden. He had been welcomed into a well-educated family with economic and cultural capital—a clear contrast to the situation he experienced while living alone in the turbulent residential care home. This new social situation meant an improved possibility to develop capital, for instance, in the field of education. Saleh had gained some stability. Such security is, however, not the case with everyone.

Bella’s Struggle

I think that someday I’ll find my family. I can’t say I’ll not find my family. I can’t think like that. If I find my family, I can manage anything. (Bella)

The last time Bella saw her mother was a few years ago, in a prison where she had been sent suspected of involvement in political activities against the regime. A few days after the visit, Bella knew that she had to flee Ethiopia together with her younger cousin, since they feared for their lives. A few years ago, they arrived in Sweden.

Dawan, working on our project, met Bella, then 19, in school for the first time. In the first observations notes, during the spring of 2015, Dawan wrote about Bella’s

positive attitude towards life, the 'Swedes' and the Swedish society. She was full of energy and motivated in school. Bella said that she loved her foster parents, whom she referred to as 'mum' and 'dad'. Bella's life plan was to study and become a nurse like her biological mother. Her foster parents were important to her in her efforts to achieve her goals in Sweden, important enough to be called mom and dad. In an early interview, she thought that the foster parents were so good because 'they know who I am'. Talking about her foster mother, she said: 'I walk out in the morning; my mother's home. When I come home, she's home. We talk, she knows what I like, she knows everything (emphasis) about me'. Bella's 'mother' seems to be especially important in helping Bella achieve her life plan and become a nurse, as well as in reproducing a sense of ontological security (Giddens, 1991), a sense of stability in life. This indicates that stability, knowing that someone cares for you, is essential to keep the focus on your life plan, which in Bella's case meant going to school and gaining capital in the form of grades. However, for Bella, this stability would soon disappear.

Unlike Jordan, Chuhan and Saleh, Bella was not able to make contact with her birth parents. Nonetheless, she longed for her biological mother, the person she felt closest to. Like in the cases of Jordan, Chuhan and Saleh, Bella's mother was rooted in Bella's habitus and emotional life. Her mother popped up in her narratives as a sediment of the past but one with whom she had shared an intimate relationship, and sometimes Bella cried when thinking about her. She carried painful memories of meaningful social relationships that were brutally disrupted by police and military violence in her country of origin. Her memories and experiences made it essential for her to create strong new social bonds to trust and rely on, as she did with her foster parents and especially her 'mother'.

Through meeting Bella repeatedly for about a year, it was found that her life changed dramatically. She started to feel worse, lonelier and less connected to her foster family. Disappointed, she told Dawan that she wanted to move to her own apartment in a middle-sized town. Initially, she explained this as being tired of living in the countryside, but over time, it came to be more and more about her biological mother. Bella missed her biological mother. Her memories of her mother affected her choices, and she chose to turn away from her foster family. She provided another explanation for why she wanted to move to the city. She said that there were more people from her country of origin living in the city and that they might be able to help her find her lost family. The foster family did not help her in her attempts to establish contact with her birth mother. Bella no longer spoke about her foster parents with love; she was no longer susceptible to their influence. Her habitus, including memories of her mother and others from her country of origin, meant that she could not gradually like the foster family, since they did not want to help her find her mother.

Bella finally got an apartment from the social services. She was happy about that, but her life soon became problematic again because of the strained relationship between her and her foster mother and because her cousin still resided in the family. One night, Bella sent Dawan a text: 'I'm very sad today, please help me!' They met up, and Bella explained what had happened. The mother had claimed that Bella's cousin became agitated after meeting Bella. Consequently, the social services and the mother had imposed restrictions on their opportunities to meet. The social services did not listen to Bella. Instead, they chose to rely on the mother's side of the

story. Bella's life situation became unstable, and she did not have any person around helping her to deal with it. She was not embedded in a social microcosmos with her foster family like before. Bella became lonely and severely depressed, which affected her whole life, including her schoolwork. At one stage, she did not attend school for 2 entire months. The hardship affected her ability to develop the capital (the grades) needed to become a nurse like her mother.

Like Saleh, Bella initially let herself get close to her foster family, creating a sense of ontological security that resembled that when she used to live with her biological family. It also meant social and economic security for Bella. Unlike Saleh's case, however, this relationship became strained. Bella had to re-prioritize, letting go of her foster family and instead focusing on finding the people deeply embedded in her habitus, such as her mother. However, this turned her towards a state of loneliness that severely disrupted her ability to stick to her previous life plan. What Bella's story exemplifies is the fragility of life planning and the importance of social support, stability and a sense of ontological security.

Navigating Through Life

Each case presented demonstrates the variety of life plans during a time in life when the participants are expected to transition into adulthood. For some, the life plan manifests and emerges when they feel they can finally plan for their future. For others, the plan has been in place since before they fled to Sweden. Evidently, there is a fragility to their life plans that is related to their position as 'unaccompanied' young persons who find that certain disruptions tend to occur as they navigate through life. These disruptions can be related to their birth family, which is deeply embodied in their habitus, and to their everyday life in Sweden and the ongoing transformation of their habitus, as well as to their position as migrants in Sweden. In this section, we discuss the fragility of life planning caused by disruptions and constraints and how these affect and impose restrictions on navigation through life and life plans.

First, Bella's mother, Saleh's brother, Jordan's father and Chuhan's mother all represent relationships *historically anchored* and *embodied in habitus*. The young refugees' decisions to act in the interest of their families are emotional and embodied, following an instant force to act without a doubt. From the outside, this may be interpreted as irrational, since it can mean having to put life plans on hold or abandoning original plans. However, these embodied relationships can make it emotionally impossible for them not to help—a mother, father, sister or brother—as they share a field of origin and are so intertwined through their common habitus, emotional life and personal history.

Second, the effect of intervention and the need to intervene are related to their personal and their families' existing or generated capital. For instance, their biological families' class, background and economic and cultural capital affect the young people's life plans. Jordan's parents have the economic and cultural capital necessary for Jordan to follow his plan and to generate the necessary cultural capital to be able to keep moving within a field of education. For others who lack this capital, life may become a fragile survival project laden with risks (cf. Bauman, 2011). This fragility manifests when the participant's whole existence turns into helping a family member by sending money or by trying to get them to Sweden, as

in Chuhan's case. The fragility stems from a lack of stability from biological family members' social and economic position.

Third, the capital being generated when in Sweden also affects the young people's possible life plans. Chuhan lacks the financial means and social support in Sweden that are necessary to help his mother, forcing him to abandon his plan to get an education and instead enter a new field of precarious work. Another capital obtainable in Sweden is related to the relationship with, and the social and financial support from, the foster family. These families can provide the capital necessary to be able to adapt to new fields, which is essential to keep the young refugees' life plans on track. Even when Saleh goes through vast trials in life, his foster family provides him with security and support. Being arrested and put on trial in another country could have put Saleh's plan under pressure, but having access to this social capital makes it possible for him to continue his initial plan to get an education. Initially, this was also the case for Bella, as support from her foster mother made it possible for her to get an education and focus on school even when she missed her biological mother or felt sad. Bella and Saleh can be said to have generated a stability in their social life in Sweden, an ontological security important for being able to follow their life plans.

Fourth, social stability and ontological security can be interpreted as what we might call *stability capital*. Such capital consists of resources that contribute to a stable and relatively harmonic situation and can be used to navigate different fields throughout everyday life. This capital can be obtained both within the young people's habitus from previous fields, such as through a family income, and through encounters and relationships formed on entering new fields in Sweden. However, as evident from Bella's situation, this potential stability can be fragile. When she no longer could rely on her foster family, her stability capital was lost, and she was all alone again. The young people's fragile position as 'unaccompanied' young refugees and 'migrants' in Sweden puts strains on their life plans and can affect their opportunities to build stability capital.

Finally, their stability capital is profoundly affected by the welfare state. Chuhan's case exemplifies the toughened migration policy in Sweden (Migrationsverket, 2016b), as well as *the neo-liberalization of the welfare state* (Dahlstedt & Ekholm, 2017), by showing that economic capital is needed to be able to get your family members to safety in Sweden. Similarly, Saleh's struggle to help his brother signifies the toughened migration laws, and his living conditions when in the group home were based on economic aspects rather than on his best interests. As initially mentioned, 'unaccompanied minors' are rarely allowed permanent residency anymore in Sweden, further straining their possibility to gain stability capital. Since many of these young people are already in an exposed situation, often lacking stability capital, a network of people around them and education without disruptions, they are further pushed into a precarious state of being.

Conclusion

Life plans are provisional (Anderson et al., 2002). They are strongly related to the present context (Devadason, 2008), such as the possible fragility of current living or financial conditions. In addition, they are—through habitus—strongly related to

historical and embodied memories of interaction; thus, people's memories and relationships from the past are felt in the present in everyday life (Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009). Furthermore, plans are affected by global inequality regimes, demonstrated by the fact that family members and friends in other parts of the world are affected by social and economic inequalities (Bauman, 2011).

The young people's habitus transforms during the very years when they are expected to plan for their future adult life; this transformation occurs through experiences of migration and as an effect of relational, social, political and economic patterns. Although it is not possible to conclude once for all if the young people have been successful in acquiring new capital and habitus or not, nor to ascertain if the circumstances during their arrival to Sweden have enabled their participation in Swedish society or not, it is possible to point towards some tendencies. On the one hand, we can see how embodied relationships embedded in habitus tend to affect the participants' possibilities to plan for their future. On the other hand, we can see how entering new fields and new kinds of relationships that are formed, upheld and dismissed can create both a sense of ontological security and new challenges affecting these young people's life plans. One important outcome is that, for some, the present context creates the stability that facilitates how they manage the ruptures created by sediments from their habitus. In the case of others, it is equally important to point out how embodied relationships based on their habitus are still able to provide the same kind of stability. Being able to acquire and maintain stability capital seems to create an advantage in terms of feeling safe, being able to maintain relationships and experiencing economic and social security. In addition, stability capital seems to create possibilities to follow and adapt one's life plan. A reception system and a welfare state providing fair chances and the ability to facilitate meaningful relationships, thus utilizing the young people's stability capital, can provide them with better opportunities to handle challenges occurring in their and their loved ones' lives.

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ORCID iD

Marcus Herz  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6555-3875>

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Authors' Bio-sketch

Philip Lalander is a professor of social work at Malmö University. He has conducted several ethnographic projects on illegal street economies, immigrants in the Swedish court system and the everyday life of unaccompanied minors in Sweden. He is interested in phenomena such as youth culture, criminality, the exercise of power and processes of stigmatization in relation to people who are seen as strange and inferior in society.

Marcus Herz is an associate professor of social work at Malmö University. His main research interests concern different aspects of power connected to social work and how social work can be developed in relation to discourses of gender, ethnicity, race and social class. His research and publications include the areas of youth studies, masculinity, gender and social work.