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Creating a Social Network: A study of unaccompanied youth in Sweden

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Abstract

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Key words: Unaccompanied minors, Unaccompanied Youths, Social Network, Social Support, Diaspora.

Previous research shows that unaccompanied minors and youth often face a gamut of challenges, among others, adjusting to a new environment and forming new social networks. Several studies have frequently highlighted the transactional relation between children's and youth's social network and their holistic development. Correspondingly, studies have also reflected that this group's situation of being uprooted from their families and previously existing social networks could be causing an aggravating effect on their well-being. However, studies focusing on the social networks of this group is limited. Similarly, the number of studies reflecting the group's own voices and perspectives is also comparatively low. In this aspect, the study seeks to foreground the voices and experiences of the studied population in relation to network building.

This study aims to understand how a group of unaccompanied youth build social network, factors responsible for building and impeding social ties and the role of these networks in their daily lives. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with nine unaccompanied youth who had entered Sweden as minors and have obtained permanent residency. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and theoretical concepts such as social capital, social support, transnationalism and diaspora were used to analyze the generated themes.

The findings of the study suggests that the respondents often build social networks with other unaccompanied minors and youth originating from their own countries. Trust and common grounds of sharing same language, similar experience and culture were pointed out as being vital for building relations. These networks were described as playing different roles such as providing assistance in expanding social ties, relocating family back home, practicing various forms of ethnic identity, influencing value changes and facilitating different avenues of integration. Respondents who perceived themselves as being a part of a supportive social network described themselves as being able to attach meaning in a new environment. However, respondents who perceived the lack of supportive ties described facing diverse challenges. The findings also includes the difficulties faced by some of the respondents in forming new social ties with other Swedish youth, foster parents and care workers due to reasons of cultural misunderstandings, lack of trusting relationships and professional boundaries.

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To god/ universe ; and all the colliding spaces, faces and places!

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With best regards,
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Acronym

1) OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
2) PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
3) UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
4) UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Chapter 1:Introduction

This chapter will discuss the background of unaccompanied minors and youth in relation to the problem area. The literature review integrated in this chapter will provide further information on statistics and care work with this group in Sweden. Similarly, a section of previous research is included so as to give a picture of similar and preceding studies in the area. The chapter ends with the rationale of the study followed by research aims and questions.

1.1Background of the problem

According to the UNHCR, an unaccompanied child is "a person who is under the age of eighteen, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is, attained earlier and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so". A number of international conventions including the UNCRC[1] enshrines a broad set of rights to provide among others; the rights to care and protection while being separated from parents (Bakker, Elings-Pels, & Reis, 2009) and the responsibility for state parties to ensure that a child seeking refugee status receives appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance (UN, 1989). Sweden was among the first countries that signed and ratified the UNCRC in September 1990 (Sheikholeslamzadeh, 2012). According to Wernesjö (2014), Sweden closely follows the UNCRC in its own local right regulating unaccompanied minors. Almost 4000 unaccompanied minors arrived in Sweden during 2013, and the figures were expected to go up by 7400 new unaccompanied minors asylum applicants in 2014 (Migrationsverket, 2014).

Previous research shows that these unaccompanied minors often face a gamut of challenges, among others, adjusting to a new environment and forming new social networks (Luster et al., 2010). According to Wernesjö (2014), separation from parents and previous social ties is one of the most aggravating circumstance for this group of children and youth. Similarly, Derulyn and Brokaert (2008), state that coupled with uprooting from parents and previous social networks, other risks such as staying in a new country, experience of traumatic ordeals, exploitation and abuse further place these unaccompanied children and youth on a vulnerable position. Moreover, the repositioning caused by migration and disruption of previous social ties and cultural environment may also result in social isolation, loss of self-identification and loss of sense of security and well-being (Boothby, 1991). Encompassed under these difficult living situation might therefore threaten the emotional well-being for unaccompanied children and youth and put them at a high risk of developing PTSD and depression (Derulyn and Brokaert, 2008; Wernesjö 2014) .

Unaccompanied minors in Sweden are closely regulated by Aliens Act that states that the best interest of the child should be taken into account in matters concerning them (Wernesjö, 2014). Unaccompanied minors who have received a permanent stay to live in Sweden receive various facilities such as a residential care setting to live in and other similar rights as Swedish children such as access to schooling and health services

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[1] The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a legally-binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities. Since being adopted by the United Nations in November 1989, the CRC has received 194 ratifications with only two countries in the world still to ratify.

(Carlier, Donato and Pavlou, 2010). However, Brekke (2004) argues that the reception system in Sweden for unaccompanied minors is often characterized by interchangeability in social relations. The children and young people are transferred from the transitional group-home, where they are placed on their arrival, to other municipalities, whereby they may have to move again. According to Wernesjö (2014), this mobility may form barriers in building trust and long lasting relationships. Correspondingly, Backlund et al., (2012 in Stretmo 2014) highlights that social services in Sweden often become quite limited in delivering diverse forms of support to this group of children due to its limited working experience in the field. They state that despite the provision of many officials and social support staffs provided by the social services in Sweden, such as care unit staff, teachers, guardians, social workers and foster parents, it is debatable and paradoxical if anyone has or will take over parental responsibility for them in their everyday life.

1.2Unaccompanied Minors in Sweden:

Various reports and statistics show that Sweden has the highest number of intake when taking into account the number of asylum applicants in relation to the size of the population. For instance, according to Eurostat (2015), in the year 2013, the highest ratio of refugees per capita was found in Sweden (5.7 applications for asylum per thousand inhabitants). Subsequent to this, it is also one of the countries that accepts the highest number of asylum applications for unaccompanied minors. According to the Swedish Migration Board's forecast in July 2014, the number of unaccompanied minors is expected to rise sharply from 4,400 to 6,500 per year by 2015. The following table shows the figures of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Sweden in 2015 so far.

Citizenship	Decisions	of which granted	of which rejected	of which dublin *1	of which others *2	Average handling time	Proportion of total number of granted decisions	Proportion of total number of granted decisions with dublin and others excluded
AFGHANISTAN	240	201	19	3	17	184	84%	91%
ALBANIEN	22		20		2	172		
ALGERIET	34			1	33	74		
ANGOLA	1		1			675		
BANGLADESH	1		1			344		
BOSNIEN OCH HERCEGO	1				1	185		
CHILE	2				2	105		
DJIBOUTI	1		1			270		
DOMINIKANSKA REPUBL	2				2	151		
ERITREA	304	298			1	5	178	98%	100%
ETIOPIEN	25	23	2			192	92%	92%
GAMBIA	3	1	1		1	217	33%	50%
GEORGIEN	3		1		2	247		
GUINEA	1		1			276		
INDIEN	2				2	5		
IRAK	13	11		1	1	232	85%	100%
IRAN	1	1				175	100%	100%
KAP VERDE	1		1			290		
KONGO	1	1				330	100%	100%
KOSOVO	5	1	3		1	159	20%	25%
LIBANON	1				1	361		
LIBYEN	5				5	71		
MAROCKO	100	3	18	2	77	108	3%	14%
MONTENEGRO	1		1			42		
NIGERIA	1		1			140		
OKÄNT	6	2			4	192	33%	100%
PAKISTAN	1		1			210		
RYSSLAND	1		1			191		
SENEGAL	1				1	113		
SERBIEN	8		6		2	101		
SOMALIA	149	99	26	6	18	207	66%	79%
STATEN PALESTINA	4	4				235	100%	100%
STATSLÖS	81	74	1	2	4	191	91%	99%
SUDAN	3	1	2			212	33%	33%
SYRIEN	264	251		4	9	171	95%	100%
TCHAD	2	2				184	100%	100%
TUNISIEN	6		2		4	181		
UGANDA	5	4			1	242	80%	100%
UKRAINA	3	1	1		1	142	33%	50%
UNDER UTREDNING	4	2			2	108	50%	100%
UZBEKISTAN	1	1				155	100%	100%
VENEZUELA	1		1			181		
VITRYSSLAND	2				2	54		
Totalt	1313	981	112	20	200	174	75%	90%

Figure 1: Asylum Decisions for unaccompanied minors (Swedish Migration Board,2015)

As can be seen in the table, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Sweden mainly constitute of minors from countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Syria , Eritria and Morocco. It can also be seen that minors from Afghanistan account for the highest number of asylum seekers.

1.3 Child welfare and Social work with Unaccompanied minors and youth in Sweden:

Sweden is one of the Scandinavian welfare states, with a universal welfare system (Esping Andersen, 1999). The Swedish welfare state with a general welfare system as opposed to the means tested benefits is also prevalently known as a social democratic welfare state (Höjer and Sjöblom, 2010). According to Gilbert, Parton and Skivenes (2011), family policies in social democratic welfare state receive the highest degree of defamiliazation, and stress on a strong government role while emphasizing the position of gender equality and well-being.

The organization of child welfare in Sweden differs from one local authority to another. In some towns, specialized units within the social services can be found whereas in others child welfare can be part of the local school organization (Hesse & Vinnerljung, 1999). The main aim of the Swedish child welfare is to provide support and services to assist children's personal, physical and social development (Gilbert et al., 2011). However, during the last decades, Swedish child protection and welfare services have frequently been criticized specially in relation in terms of local social workers recruited for child protection work by municipalities as being "overly cautious, unenterprising and even incompetent in taking care of the best interest of children " (Gilbert et al., 2011, p. 90).

Social work with unaccompanied minors in Sweden works closely with the Swedish Social Service Act (Carlier et al., 2010). This act encompasses that the municipal authorities are ultimately responsible for the delivery of social services, especially the municipal council (ibid.). The unaccompanied minors who have received a positive answer to stay in Sweden are referred to various private and state run residential housings by social workers appointed by the municipal council. Social workers and care givers thereafter work closely with the unaccompanied minors in delivering an effective care system (ibid.).The Aliens Act is another Swedish instrument which guides the right of this group of children. It was adopted in 2005 and came into force in 2006. This instrument is divided into 23 chapters, and each chapter includes sections which contain provisions concerning the conditions related to the migrants, their rights and the duties to stay in Sweden. Concerning unaccompanied asylum- seeking children, the Aliens Act includes several provisions highlighting on mainly the rights of the child. Some of the provisions are; a)The best interests of the child should be respected and special attention should be given to the rights of the child; b) The child's voice should be heard unless it is inappropriate; c)In some exceptional cases such as exceptionally distressing situations, the child should be granted a residence permit (Aliens Act: 2005).

The Swedish system of reception entails that the municipalities are primarily responsible for the reception and care of unaccompanied minors during the asylum seeking process. A positive decision which results in the issuing of a residence permit that facilitates their status change (from asylum applicant to refugee or recipient of protection) can affect how they are accommodated; as such, they may be required to move to another structure where they will possibly have more autonomy (Carlier et al.,

2010).Unaccompanied minors who have received a permanent stay to live in Sweden receive various facilities such as a residential care setting to live in and other similar rights as a Swedish children such as access to schooling and health services (ibid.). According to Wernesjö (2014), due to the recognition of the vulnerable situation of unaccompanied minors such as their situation of being separated from their parents, they have additional extended contact with Swedish public authorities and social welfare services in comparison to other asylum-seekers, children in families included.

1.4 Previous Research

The need for an increased intervention for the provision of social support and generation of social networks in relation to unaccompanied minors and youth have been highlighted and studied by various research works which will be discussed further. Stretmo (2014) conducted a qualitative study to examine how unaccompanied minors are constructed and governed as a specific group of refugees in Norway and Sweden. The interviewed social workers on her study on different instances highlighted the need for unaccompanied minors and youth to be framed as a group needing extra compensation in the absence of parental support and social network. They also pointed out the necessity to take needed actions to help this group overcome their inferior position in this context.

Similarly, Hopkins and Hills (2010) conducted a qualitative study in Scotland to uncover the main needs of unaccompanied minors drawing upon the views of service providers. The interviewed social workers and professionals highlighted the need for more avenues to assist unaccompanied minors to form friendships and social contacts. In their opinion providing assistance in building their social networks is primal in order to build and strengthen their resilience. Another lawyer who was interviewed in the same research signalled for the need to build a more focused national plan to assist these minors in engaging in social activities and to build social networks.

A qualitative study conducted by Luster et al., (2010) to explore factors contributing to successful adaptations of nineteen Sudanese Unaccompanied minors in America after seven years of their resettlement pointed out that children considered social relations with foster parents and peers to be crucial factors for their successful adaptation. They expressed that foster parents assisted them as guides by helping them become aware of the culture of their new homeland. They also highlighted that their foster parents offered them with important advice which helped them in their education. Likewise, they stated that various instrumental and emotional support provided by them assisted them in dealing with day to day life situations and especially with instances of stress. Similarly, some of the youth also pointed out that foster siblings and American peers assisted them in adjusting to their new homeland. For instance, one of the youngest participants noted the value of connecting with American peers through sports. According to him, his teammates helped him understand what American kids do, and he applied this knowledge in other contexts, such as school. He opines that his teammates also helped him gain peer acceptance by connecting him to their wider network of friends. This goes in line with Ryan et al., (2008) who state that social networks often help in serving various purposes; one of them being, expanding bonds and socializing. Similarly, Portes (1995) talks about how migrant networks act as a key element in facilitating community formation. This study points out the value that unaccompanied children place on having social networks and receiving support from their points of contacts in the host country such as their foster parents, foster siblings and classmates at school. They identified

social support received from social networks that they build at foster homes and schools as providing them with vital assistance in successfully adapting to a new system and a new country and more importantly on dealing with stressful situations. The unaccompanied minors in their study also often engaged themselves in transnational practices with their native communities such as the provision of various forms of support such as emotional and financial. Engebrigsten (2002 in Stretmo 2014) states that unaccompanied children and youngsters continue to act as responsible family members catering to some of the needs of the family even post settlement in a host country.

Williamson's (1998) conducted a study in the UK focusing on the experiences and wishes of twenty-three asylum seeking young people. Findings from the study suggests that the respondents among others longed for caring adults who made them feel safe and connected them to meaningful networks as key aspects of support.

Stretmo (2014) cites Pastoor de Wal (2012), Backlund et al., (2012), and Stretmo and Melander's (2013) research on unaccompanied children in the Norwegian and Swedish school systems. According to their analysis, unaccompanied minors and youth were often described by their teachers and themselves as showing agency and motivation especially in terms of progressing at school and constructing new friendship ties among others .

Results of a twelve month qualitative study conducted by Wells (2011) in England using photo elicitation interviews with eight young refugees to explore their social networks highlighted social networks as boulevards through which social capital surged and provided emotional support for young refugees and minors. Participants were given high quality mobile phones with digital camera capacity and uploading facilities and were asked to take photographs of places that they went to in the course of an ordinary week. At the meetings , the participants were then asked to talk about their photographs and the places that they recorded. Most children of the study opined that their social networks comprised of friends who assisted them in dealing with stressful situations by offering them companionship and as someone to talk to during challenging times. The findings from the study showed that unaccompanied minors often built friendship networks that linked together home and the journey. For instance, most of the boys in the study expressed that they were now close friends with people who they met in London but were originally from their home country or countries having geographical proximity to their own country of origin . Similarly, some even shared that the boys had an opportunity of becoming friends with other people they met at different places during the journey to England.

They also expressed that they feel connected with other minors having similar asylum seeking backgrounds owing to the fact that they had travelled similar journeys and undergone similar situations. People who share similar backgrounds have a higher chance of being connected (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2011). Berndt (1989) postulate that friends offer different types of social support such as emotional and instrumental. Though studies have pointed on the importance of friendship ties, other studies have also highlighted on some crucial aspects affecting friendship ties and social ties. Mok and Wellman (2007) state that the provision of social support in personal communities decreases with increasing of spatial distance between individuals which is affected by the reduction in the frequency of meetings in physical co-presence. Vernberg, Greenhoot, and Biggs (2006) examined the effect of relocation to a new

community on intimacy and companionship in adolescent friendships. Their findings provided strong evidence that youths who were relocated experienced a lower level of intimacy and companionship in their friendships compared to youths who remained residentially stable.

Similarly, an ethnographic research done by Wahlström (2010) to explore the experiences of unaccompanied young people from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in terms of how they adapted to their changing and adverse circumstances as refugees in London hinted that the young people's social relations in the host country provided various benefits in this regard. Among these, relations with other refugees the same age were held as particularly important. Field (1982) states that supportive relations whether it be companionship, instrumental or emotional tends to be age-homophilic. Similarly, McPherson et al., (2011) states that supportive relations not only depend on similar age factor but also on similar gender.

Studies have showed that unaccompanied minors engage in various bonding activities such as building friendship with people who are from their country of origin (Wells, 2011) and also prefer being fostered by parents who share a similar cultural identity with them (Luster et al., 2010). However, some minors though on one hand acknowledged the role of support received from other peers sharing similar national and cultural identity and from family ties from their country of origin, on the other hand, they also expressed concerns that spending most of their time exclusively with only those they share transnational ties with might impede them in learning what might be vital to know about their host culture to adapt successfully (Luster et al., 2010). In line with this, Helve and Bynner (2007) also points out how bonding relationships within similar groups can lead to social exclusion in wider social networks in contrast to bridging social capital. Reynolds (2011) states that this type of bonding can at times also create negative social capital for young migrants especially if their networks impose values and restrict them from choosing their own lifestyle.

According to Wells (2011), some unaccompanied minors rely on ties with their native communities for emotional support whereas they rely on institutional networks in the host countries when it comes to building their social capital in terms of enhancing their access to material resources. This shows that young migrants are usually seen bonding with their native communities and/ or bridging with institutions and people in the host countries according to their diverse needs. This goes in line with Morgan's (1990) description of network as not being static, but rather fluid, changing as participants' needs and circumstances alter over time.

To sum up, it is important to point out that though results of various studies have highlighted on the importance of social support and social networks in the lives of unaccompanied minors and youth, only a relatively small number of research have focused on how these minors build social networks. Not much relevant study published in English regarding how unaccompanied minors build social network have been found and especially in the context of Sweden. In this context, it is imperative to explore social relations, both formal as well as informal in order to investigate the potentials as well as the constraints for unaccompanied children and young people.

1.5 Purpose and Relevance of the study:

Firstly, the study builds on the reason that Sweden has one of the highest influx of unaccompanied minors. In this regard, it is vital to see whether their resettlement here in Sweden is not only supported by a welfare system but whether it has also assisted avenues of regenerating and building social networks and meaningful ties in the absence of parental ties. The analysis of social network has taken an important place in migration research as it assists in comprehending how new migrants utilise social ties to form communities, to find out how things work in the host country, and primarily to accumulate social capitals (Bashi 2007, Reynolds 2011). In this regard, the study could offer some insights on how unaccompanied youth build and utilise these social ties.

Secondly, it seeks to fill the gap in literature about unaccompanied minors and youth in relation to their social network. There has been little analysis to date of the social networks of children and youth in general (Weller, 2005) and even less of those young people "at the margins of the late-modern society" (Heikkinen 2000, p. 391). As far as the researchers knowledge, only a limited number of studies that have focused on how unaccompanied minors and youth build social networks can be found in English (e.g., Wells, 2010). In this line, it is hoped that the study could provide some relevant information about unaccompanied minors and their experience with social networks.

Thirdly, one of the significant focus of this study is to acknowledge the agency possessed by unaccompanied minors and youth and assist them with a platform to share their experience on the topic. Wernesjö (2014) identifies that unaccompanied children and young people constitute a group that are frequently talked about, but at the same time, a group who are seldom allowed to speak for themselves. In this form of depiction, the chances are high that they might become marginalized as "their voices are not heard, their identities are reduced to stereotypes, and with a pathologisation and focus on vulnerability they are reduced to victims that are seen as lacking agency"(Wernesjö 2014, p. 13). Kohli (2011) argues for the need of research to take the perspectives of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and youth into account in order to explore how they themselves define and reflect upon issues concerning them. In this aspect, the study seeks to understand their experiences and perspectives with network building and different social support avenues.

It is hoped that the collected data will assist in identifying possible avenues or barriers supporting or restricting the growth of social networks for this group of children. By systematically assessing the interconnected relationships and support networks of these children, it is anticipated that the results will assist in improving care work with unaccompanied minors and youth especially in terms of facilitating them with regeneration of social networks and building meaningful ties.

1.6 Research Aim and Questions:

The study aims to understand how a group of unaccompanied minors and youth build social networks. Similarly, it also seeks to understand the importance of their social networks in their daily lives. The thesis is conducted to represent the respondents voice by providing them with a platform to share their experience in this matter. In this aspect, the main research questions are:

1) How do unaccompanied minors build new social networks?

2) What are the factors that these children identify as being vital for building relationships in their social network?
3) What are the factors that they consider as hindering the development of their social network?
4) What is the role of their social network in their daily lives?

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

When conducting research, there can be a list of theories to choose from. To choose a right theory requires the researcher to carefully analyse and select a theory that can best fit the study. Although unaccompanied youths are a special group of migrants especially with their situation of arriving alone in a host country and being unaccompanied, it was acknowledged that they also bear resemblance with other migrants in case of the experience of migration and being new to a host country. According to Raghuram, Henry and Bornat (2010), the focus of networks to the well-being of migrants has been widely investigated and theorized, the latter through the lens of social capital .Similarly, the analysis of social network has taken an important place in migration research as it assists in comprehending how new migrants utilise social ties to form communities and accumulate social capitals (Bashi 2007; Reynolds 2010). In this aspect, social capital was chosen as one of the main theoretical concept with a view to understand how unaccompanied youth build social ties and the role of these networks in generating various forms of social capital. The sub concepts of social capital such as bonding and bridging also assisted the researcher in identifying various patterns of network building. Similarly, the theoretical concept of social support was chosen with an aim to understand the role and importance of social support in the daily life of the respondents. Correspondingly, the concepts of transnationalism and diaspora were used after being guided by research findings as respondents talked of forming transnational and diasporic ties. Further description about the concepts are presented below.

2.1 Social Network and Social Capital

According to Marsden (2000), a social network is a structure of relationships linking social actors. Similarly, Wasserman and Faust (1994) talks about social networks as a set of ties amongst these actors. Correspondingly, Pescosolido (1991) states that ties and relationships are the basic building blocks of human experience which assist in mapping the relations that individuals have to one another. Knoke (1990) stipulates that the structure of these relationships among actors has imperative resulting effects for both individuals and for the whole system.

In Putnam's rendering social capital is juxtaposed with 'social network' (Wells, 2011). According to Putnam (2007, p. 137), "Social capital involves the social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that people accumulate and convert to other forms of capital or which are sustained by cultural forms and representations".

2.1.1 Bonding and Bridging Forms of Social Capital

According to Ryan et al., (2008), social capital as a sociological concept, has evolved in various ways from the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1990) and has become mostly associated with the work of Putnam (2007) over the last decade. Reynolds (2011) illustrates Putnam's differentiation of social capital into its aptitude of producing 'bonding' and 'bridging' networks. Bonding is the aspect of social capital that is directed inwards into a homogenous group and trust and reciprocity within this (Reynolds, 2011). Bridging, on the other hand, is directed outwards and assists in building connections between different social groups hence generating inter-community contacts (ibid.).

To explain further, Putnam (2000 in Field, 2003) states that bonding social capital is based around family, close friends and other near kin; and by binding people from a similar sociological position; it tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups. On the other hand, he goes on to describe bridging social capital as one that connects people to more distant acquaintances and tends to generate broader identities. According to him, bridging social capital is capable of creating greater reciprocity rather than strengthening a narrow binding. Granovetter (1973) goes on to describe this bonding and bridging social capital in his terminology of 'strong ties ' and 'weak ties'. According to him, social networks may involve 'strong ties' attributed by emotional intensity, intimacy and reciprocity within socially bounded groups with strongly overlapping network membership, as well as 'weak ties' that members have with those from other social groups. Similarly, Lin's (2001) terminology of these two distinction of social capital follows Granovetter's (1973) terminology of 'strong ties' and 'weak ties'. Lin's definition of strong ties follows the principle of homophily which according to her binds together people with others whom they find similar to themselves and whom they share rather similar resources in order to pursue identity-based and normative goals. Similarly, according to her, weak ties link together people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. She goes on to state that these weak ties rely less on strongly shared values but can be beneficial in providing access to new resources.

2.1.2 Trust and Reciprocity in Social Capital

Fukuyama (1995), one of the theorist of social capital defines trust as the basic feature of social capital. According to him, "Social capital is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it" (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 26). He even claims that trust also forms the very basis of social order, "Communities depend on mutual trust and will not arise spontaneously without it" (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 25). Similarly, Uslaner (1999) expresses a similar view stating that social capital reflects a system of value and primarily social trust. Similarly, Field (2003) states that a high trust network functions more effectively than a low trust one. Close to the concept of trust in social capital, is another concept of reciprocity. According to Putnam (2000), the building block of social capital is the principle of generalized reciprocity, "I'll do this for you now, without expecting anything immediately in return and perhaps without even knowing you, confident that down the road you or someone else will return the favour" (Putnam, 2000, p. 134). Similarly, Field (2003) talks about a similar concept of reciprocity stating that in social networks, people not only cooperate with each other in order of not to be defrauded or exploited but also do so as they expect to benefit similarly in return.

2.2 Transnationalism and Diaspora

Transnationalism is a perspective that challenges the preceding notions that migrants are uprooted from social ties during and after the process of migration (Brettell, 2000). According to this perspective, migrants are not disrupted from their previous networks but that they, on the other hand uphold their ties with both their native country and the new host country.

As pointed out by Faist (2000), migrants often have and maintain both social as well as symbolic ties to their home community which becomes a vital part of their social network or social capital. The ties by offering a platform for the flow of "multiple transactions of ideas, monetary resources, goods, symbols, and cultural practices and

often bridge two spaces surpassing different borders" (Faist, 2000, p. 196). Corresponding to this, there is also a transaction of norms, practices, identities and social capital between migrants and their native communities (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2010).

Diaspora is another concept that is widely discussed in migration studies. Fortier (2005) describes diaspora as a medium for new migrant groups to think about questions of belonging, home and identity with the experience of displacement from their countries with the migration process. Similarly, Harutyunyan (2012) describes diaspora as "the existence of the relationship between original homeland, ethnic community and host land which also includes the process of transnationalizaton and networking among the communities of a given ethnic group" (Harutyunyan, 2012, p. 5). She opines that the classical theory of diaspora usually talks about the integration and assimilation of people into host societies post migration facilitated by factors such as the reaffirmation of the worth of the collective myth, common shared ethnic identity and images of a unitary homeland. However, she argues that after migration, people , through various mediums such as cultural representations, symbols and practices try to build connections not necessarily only with their homeland but also with other places of their life before migration (ibid.). These diasporic practices may range from celebrating festivals or preparing food from the home country. Migrant's everyday practices such as that of food provision and consumption enable them to reconstruct and communicate their diasporic identities and can also re-establish feelings of belongingness (Brightwell, 2012).

2.3 Social Support

Gottlieb (1985) describes social support as a feedback provided via contact with similar and valued peers in a social network. In this sense, it is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. Schaefer, Coyne and Lazarus (1981, p. 381-401) describes five types of social support namely; a) emotional support) esteem support, c) network support, d) information support and e) tangible support. According to them, emotional support refers to the various types of support that caters to an individual's emotional or affective needs, esteem support is more associated to support that accentuates an individual's self confidence to handle challenges, network support refers to the support that affirms the individuals sense of belonging in the network. Similarly, they go on to describe information support as a communication that provides useful information in times of need and tangible support such as providing with financial and instrumental help.

According to Barrera (1986, p. 415-417) three different conceptualizations can be found in empirical studies concerning social support namely, 'social embeddedness', 'perceived social support', and 'enacted social support'. According to Streeter and Franklin (1992), social embeddedness is related to the actual connections people have with significant others in their environment. These connections are considered as crucial indicators of a person's access to social resources which is capable of providing supportive functions in times of crisis. Social embeddedness is closely linked to one's sense of belonging to the community, and it implies lack of social isolation and alienation (Gottlieb, 1983; Sarason, 1974).

Similarly, perceived social support views support as a cognitive appraisal of one's connections to significant others (Streeter and Franklin, 1992). Measures of perceived social support identifies that not all linkages between individuals and their environment result in social support. Even if the prospective exists for a particular relationship to produce expressions of support, it is not likely to do so unless it is perceived as available or adequate to meet the need of an individual (Cohen and Hoberman, 1983; Procidano and Heller, 1983; Turner, Frankel and Levin, 1983). Measures of perceived social support focus on the individual's cognitive appraisal of his or her social environment and the level of confidence he or she has that when support is needed it will be available, sufficient to meet the need, and offered in a way that is perceived as beneficial (Tracy, 1990). Similarly, according to Tardy (1985), enacted support is a behavioural assessment of social support and its measures depends on recall of past experiences rather than actual observations of supportive behaviours.

Similarly, two dominant propositions have been found addressing the link between social support and well-being. Cohen and Wills (1985, p. 311-312), postulate that on the basis of the functions and need of social support, two main hypothesis can be generated, namely, 'the main effect ' and the 'stress buffer'. In this line, they state that the 'main effect' hypothesis suggests that social support is advantageous all the time whereas the 'stress buffer' hypothesis purports that social support is mainly beneficial during times of stress. One of the main idea of the 'main effect ' hypothesis is that social support is vital in everyday daily life as it assists people to maintain a state of predictability and stability and helps them to recognize their self worth or self importance (Cohen and Wills, 1985). However, the 'stress buffer' hypothesis focuses on the idea that social support is mainly needed to protect or buffer people from the negative effects of stressful life events (ibid.). According to them, first and foremost, support may mediate between the stressful event and a stress response by preventing or accentuating a stress appraisal response. In this sense, a situation might be avoided to be viewed as highly stressful given that there is a perception that others will assist with necessary resources when needed. Secondly, they state that adequate support may mediate between the experience of stress and the commencement of the pathological upshot by directly influencing physiological processes or by assisting in elimination or reduction of the stress response .

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 The Study

The goal of the study was to find out how unaccompanied minors build new social networks and the role of these networks in their daily lives. It also sought to gain their view on different factors supporting or impeding relations in these social networks. Moreover, it also aimed to understand their experiences with different support avenues.

A total of nine participants were interviewed in the study. Semi structured questionnaires were used to generate in-depth interview on the topic. The participants were provided with ample space to discuss their ideas freely. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis and interpreted and discussed in the light of various theoretical concepts such as social capital, diaspora, transnationalism and social support.

3.2 Qualitative Research

This study is based on a qualitative method using interviews. Bryman (2012) defines qualitative research as one where, the stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants. Similarly, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) hold the view that "qualitative research provide us with descriptions of the qualitative human world, and qualitative interviewing can provide us with well-founded knowledge about our conversational reality" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.47). In line with this, qualitative interview was chosen for this study with a view that it would impart children's and youths experiences with building new social networks after their arrival to Sweden. The study sought to understand the social world of the respondents in relation to building and forming networks according to their own interpretation. Exploratory and descriptive research design was employed in the study. The research aimed to explore the factors impeding relation building in social networks. Similarly, it also aimed to describe how unaccompanied minors build networks in the host country and arrive at descriptive comprehension of factors enhancing and impeding relation building in these networks.

3.3 Researching a "vulnerable" group: Challenges to gain access

According to Stretmo (2012, p. 86), unaccompanied children and youths can often be described as *vulnerable research subjects* mainly because of their situation of being separated from parents at an early age and their position of being victims to various forms of oppression. Similarly, Broch (2012 in Wernesjö, 2014) states that although unaccompanied minors have many features that distinguish them both individually and as a group from others, they also share some similarities with other children and young people in vulnerable and marginalized positions, such as children in foster care and children who have experienced trauma. Similarly, Engeberigsten (2012 in Stretmo, 2014) state that as children, minors are often dependent on adults and have a constrained freedom of action and autonomy. Thus, gaining access to conduct research with such a group of children and young people can often be a struggle.

On the process of looking for participants, previous researchers and master degree students who had conducted research with unaccompanied minors in Sweden were contacted. They suggested names of organizations and places to contact. Researcher's

supervisor was also helpful in assisting with a list of possible organizations to contact. Similarly, a friend who is also a Swedish social work student and carrying out his internship in a care home for unaccompanied minors was extremely helpful in linking the researcher with a list of other care units. Correspondingly, the contact addresses of care units working in Gothenburg and surrounding municipalities were abstracted from the internet.

However, majority of the contacted organizations rejected the proposal stating that the companies had a privacy policy to protect the minors. Similarly, one organization put forward that some of the children had been exposed to a lot of research work before and that they were trying to set some boundaries. Likewise, some organizations who tried to help stated that the researcher's language limitation of not speaking Swedish would form as a barrier.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

3.4.1 Purposive sampling and selection Criterion

The research followed a purposive sampling as the researcher did not seek to sample research participants on a random basis. Bryman (2012) describes the goal of purposive sampling as to sample participants who are relevant to the research questions. In this line, attempts of finding samples were done by contacting organizations and care units working with unaccompanied minors and youth. The researcher had set two main criteria for the selection of respondents. One of the criteria was to select participants (minors or youths) who had entered Sweden as unaccompanied minors. This was done because the research specifically seeks to understand the experience of this group of refugee in terms of network building. Similarly, another criteria of selection was to interview respondents who had received a permit to stay in Sweden. This was done keeping in mind that those with a permit to stay are governed by different care and service arrangements compared to the ones still waiting for asylum decisions. The researcher specifically wanted to study the network building patterns of those with a permit and facilitated by care arrangements. The purposive sampling was later facilitated by gate keeping and snowball sampling.

3.4.2 Gate keeping

Gate keeping was used as one of the medium to gain access to some of the participants. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 62) state that, "In formal organizations, for example, initial access negotiations may be focused on official permission that can legitimately be granted or withheld by key personnel. Although not necessarily the case, such gatekeepers are often the ethnographer's initial point of contact with such research settings". In this line, the researcher had to go through gate keepers to access participants in different formal organizations such as care units and organizations working with unaccompanied minors. One of the gatekeeper (boss of a care unit) assisted the researcher in looking for potential participants. He briefed the boys in the care unit about the research purpose, aims and about the interview guideline. They were then asked to confirm their participation on a voluntary basis. Four respondents were generated through this process. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) state that using gatekeepers might entail a certain risk as they might exercise some degree of control by blocking certain lines of enquiry or in deciding who can take part in the research work. However, as the contacted gatekeeper notified all the boys in the care unit about the

research and as emphasis was given on voluntary participation, it is the researchers view that the respondents were not obliged or directed to participate in the study but rather did so out of interest.

3.4.3 Snow ball sampling

Similarly, one of the participant who was involved in running support groups for other unaccompanied minors and youth helped the researcher to get in contact with five other respondents. According to Bryman (2012), snowball sampling is a sampling technique in which the sampled participants propose other participants who have had the experience or characteristics relevant to the research and then they are linked to others and so on. Similarly, Noy (2008) points out that snowball sampling is frequently presented as a strategy to be employed when probability sampling is impossible or not achievable especially when trying to sample hard to reach populations because of the absence of a sampling frame. Corresponding to this, snow ball sampling assisted the researcher in accessing and getting into contact with other participants who might not have been contacted otherwise. Thus, four participants were recruited through gate keeping and the remaining five participants were reached through snow ball sampling .

3.5 Sample size and respondent dynamics

While there are no closely defined rules for sample size in qualitative research (Baum 2002; Patton 1990), sampling usually relies on small numbers guided with the intention of studying in detail and depth (Miles & Huberman 1994; Patton 1990). It was perceived by the researcher, that the interviews conducted by far with the nine respondents did assist in gaining insightful depth on the topic that was being studied. It was also recognised that though differing in some aspects, most of the generated data showed quite similar patterns. Though operating under other constraints such as limited time and difficulty in gaining access, one of the main reasons to halt at the sample size of nine was after the researcher perceived that the conducted interviews provided informative and extensive data to support comprehensive argumentations in relation to the research questions. Sampling in qualitative research continues until no new information is forthcoming or nothing new is heard during the process of interviewing (Patton 2002; Ezzy 2002; Higginbotham, Albrecht and Connor 2001). According to Tuckett (2004), this point of data saturation is dependent upon data collection and analysis .

Out of the nine participants who were interviewed for the study, six were from Afghanistan, and the rest were from Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. The respondents were all boys. Though the researcher would have wanted to involve respondents from as many countries as possible and also girls in the study, it was not feasible due to various reasons such as difficulty in gaining access. However, the distribution of respondents, with a high representation of Afghani boys can also be attributed to the dominant figure of Afghani unaccompanied minors in Sweden. Similarly, the figures of girls coming in as unaccompanied minor in Sweden is also relatively low.

The study involved both minors and youth who have entered Sweden as unaccompanied minors. The respondents were aged between 17- 21. All of them had obtained a permit to stay in Sweden. A table further representing the biographical information of the respondents can be found in the following analysis chapter. Although two respondents

interviewed in the study were aged 17 and thus below 18, the researcher has used the term youth to describe the respondents in general.

3.6 Researcher Dynamics

Padgett (1998) describes how the researcher's background such as gender, race, age and social class might affect the research process. Though the researcher shared certain attributes with the respondents such as originating from a country outside Sweden and being able to speak the same language as some of the some of the respondents, there were dominant aspects that were different such as the context of being in Sweden. The researchers condition of being a international student was completely different from the context of the respondents who entered Sweden for purposes of asylum seeking. Therefore it was perceived that the researcher did not play any active insider role in the research. The researcher was clearly aware of her role as a researcher and tried to maintain objectivity as much as possible. She often reflected on her role and conducted self-reflexive enquiry so as to remind herself questions about the research process. Objectivity was maintained in the interviews by not adding the researcher's own view to guide the interview in a certain way. Similarly, it was ensured that the findings of the study depended on the nature of what was studied rather than on the own personality, beliefs and values of the researcher (Payne and Payne, 2004).

3.7 The interview Process

The interviewee were given choices in deciding when and where they wanted to be interviewed according to their preference. All the interviews in the study were individual interviews. Four of the interviews were conducted in a silent room of a care unit. Similarly, two interviews were conducted in the seminar room of one organization. Two other interviews were conducted in a silent room in the apartment of an interviewee as the prior plan of conducting it in the library had to be cancelled due to timing reasons. One of the interviews was conducted in a silent corner in the city library. The interviews lasted approximately between twenty five minutes to one hour.

3.7.1 Interview Tools

The interview questions were generated by branching out sub questions from the four main research questions. Similarly, some theoretical concepts assisted the researcher in formulating several other questions. The question about networks composition was also facilitated by identifying avenues of various forms of support such as emotional, appraisal, companionship and informational support which were listed out by Schafer et al., (1981) and described more in detail in the theoretical chapter. Similarly, Wellman's (1999) model of personal networks comprising of social ties that young people consider somehow noteworthy in their lives was used to gain information about the relations that the respondents considered significant. A copy of the interview guideline can be found in appendix of the thesis.

Semi structured interviews were used by the researcher. To proceed with a qualitative method, semi-structured interview was chosen. According to Bryman (2008), semi-structured interview entails the researcher to start with a set of general open questions which are in line with the research questions. Using general open questions offers the interviewees the autonomy to express their point of view, build confidence and feel comfortable with the interviewer. It furthermore allows the interviewees to lead the

conversation (ibid.). The interview consisted of various parts. In the first part, respondents were asked about some biographical information such as their name, age and country of origin. In the second part of the interview, respondents were allowed to share their experience after their arrival to Sweden. Then, various questions of emotional, appraisal, companionship and informational support were asked to map out avenues of social support and identity their network composition. Similarly, they were also asked to talk about relationships that they considered as important. They were encouraged to speak freely under these topics. Various questions such as introducing questions to gain view about topics, follow up questions to clarify descriptions and meaning, probing questions so as to encourage respondents to speak more about the topics were used in the interview. Similarly, the researcher made extensive use of interpreting questions so as to reframe and rephrase what the respondents had said and to check her understanding of the interviewees' answers.

3.7.2 Recording the interview

All of the interviews were tape recorded. However, one of the respondent showed hesitance in recording his voice. Respecting his choice, the researcher complied with his decision. Notes were taken down and reframing questions were asked when needed to reframe and check his answers and to make sure that no important information was not missed out. All though all the remaining interviews were recorded, additional field notes were also taken during the interview process.

3.8 The analysis Process

3.8.1 Transcription and Translation

All of the recorded interviews were transcribed word by word. In this regard, verbatim method of transcribing was employed. Similarly, to ensure the accuracy of the transcription, the recordings were listened to several times. The transcribed data was also read and re-read several times. Out of the nine interviews, four of the interviews were conducted in Urdu and the rest were conducted in English. The interviews conducted in Urdu were translated into English by the researcher. Limitations of this process are discussed more under the limitation section at the end of this chapter.

3.8.2 Organisation of the findings- thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen by the researcher as a mode of analysis of the data. This was done in order to group common patterns within the data. It was perceived that thematic analysis would be well suited for the study so as to identify patterns and come up with meaningful themes associated to the research question. According to Bryman (2012) a theme is a category that is identified by the researcher in the data that related to the research focus and builds on codes identified in the transcripts or field notes. So as to generate themes, various features of the data that were considered relevant to the research questions were identified and coded in the transcripts. Furthermore, common patterns of discussions were also carefully observed and coded. Kvale (2007) defines coding as a process of categorization of specific themes. The research question assisted in generating some main themes. Furthermore, analytical tables facilitated the researcher to tabulate codes identified in the transcripts under the main themes. Thereafter, when grouping the codes into themes, various factors such as identifying repetitions of topics, transition of topics, exploring similarities and differences in the

data were given close attention to as suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2003). Finally, common codes were framed together into a series of separate analytic themes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). These analytical themes were then grouped together as sub themes. Finally, suitable titles that assisted in capturing the essence of the topic under discussion were generated to the sub themes.

The gathered data was analyzed under the light of various theoretical concepts such as that of social capital, social support, diaspora and transnationalism. Previous research on the related field were also cited to confirm and explain new findings. In the process of describing the themes, various quotations from the respondent were used so as to elucidate the findings. Direct quotations from the respondents are predominantly used in the analysis chapter. However, at times, common patterns of discussions were also summarised by the researcher. It was not possible to use all the quotations generated under every topic. Quotations that provided descriptive detail of common discussion generated by the respondents are mainly used. Similarly, quotations that represented divergent or new patterns of discussions are also equally used in the study.

3.9 Secondary data: Literature Review

Finding literature on unaccompanied minors can be quite challenging as there is a vast number of literature on unaccompanied minors. However, not all the literature that can be abstracted is conducted in the same discipline. It was found that the dominant number of studies on unaccompanied minors were conducted in the field of psychology and health. The researcher used various search engines to look at research and studies done in the field. The university's online library catalogue was employed as one of the main search tool. Similarly, various databases such as Proquest and Directory of Open Journals were also used by the researcher.

Combination of various keywords such as social ties of unaccompanied minors, unaccompanied youth and social network ,unaccompanied minors and social support, unaccompanied minors and youth in Sweden were used and assisted in generating related studies in the field. However as there wasn't a lot of literature on unaccompanied minors and social network, the researcher broadened the search criteria by employing new key words such as social networks of youths, social networks of migrants, social support and migrants. As a result, the researcher was able to access various studies ranging from journal articles, dissertation as well as previous research on the field. Reviewing the literature was an ongoing procedure throughout the whole writing process. Literature was reviewed starting from formulating the problem and continued towards the end of the thesis to substantiate final findings and new topics generated by the study.

3.10 Reliability ,Validity and Generalization

As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) mentions, "reliability is the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings; it is often treated in relation to the issue of whether a finding is reproducible at other times and by other researchers"(2009, p. 245). In this case, the trustworthiness of the research can be supported by the recordings and transcriptions of the interview. Transparency has also been achieved through using the appendixes (including the questionnaire and informed consent form) as well as providing clear presentation of data analysis process and results.

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), "validation rests on the quality of the researcher's craftsmanship throughout an investigation, on continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings" (2009, p. 249). To ensure validity, the researcher often checked her understanding of the interviewees' answers by reframing and rephrasing their answers. Similarly, all the recorded interviews have been reviewed and compared with the text in order to see if anything was incorrect or missing.

As the study uncovers the experience of a group of nine unaccompanied youth, it might not be possible to generalize the findings to be the case of all unaccompanied children and youth. However, this study could offer insights into some possible patterns of network building that could be better investigated through a quantitative approach or other in-depth qualitative studies in future.

3.11 Limitations

The study does have a number of limitations. First and foremost, being an international student, with little information about Gothenburg and very little proficiency in Swedish language resulted in some difficulties in knowing where to access needed information at times. The searches in English were also limiting the researcher to access sites and information in Swedish. A number of related studies and previous research in the field have been conducted and published in Swedish and therefore gaining access to their content was quite difficult for the researcher.

Secondly, due to language barrier, and limited English proficiency, two respondents who had agreed to participate in the study chose to speak their mother tongue in interpreter- mediated interviews, whilst the rest of the interviews were conducted in Urdu and English . The care unit assisted the researcher with the hiring and paying for the interpreters. Professional interpreters were hired for the interviews. According to Wernesjö (2014) the benefits of using an interpreter are that young people, who may not have felt comfortable enough to participate otherwise, can participate and communication is facilitated. According to Keselman (2013 in Stretmo 2014) the quality of the translation is more accurate when the translation is conducted by a qualified translator. However, as Wernesjö (2014) mentions, with translation there is also an increased risk of misapprehensions and slippages in meaning. In order to minimize the risk of misinterpretation due to the translation, the researcher repeated, briefly what the participant had said before moving on to the next list of questions. This technique of repetition was also used in other interviews that were conducted in Urdu and English. Among all the interviews, four of the interviews were conducted in Urdu and rest was conducted in English. Since the thesis is in English, the researcher had to translate the quotes used from Urdu to English. Despite the researchers efforts to translate as precisely as possible, there might be a risk that some of the initial meanings and nuances have been lost in translation.

3.12 Ethical Consideration

Ethics has become a foundation for conducting effective and meaningful research. As such, the ethical behaviour of individual researchers is under unique enquiry (Best and Kahn, 2006; Field and Behrman, 2004). Correspondingly, Thomas and Byford (2003) state that although the need for a good research in the field of unaccompanied minors

and youth is vital, the researcher must employ ethically sensitive research strategies so as to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people.

Ethical considerations were taken into reflection ranging from pre-briefing the respondents about the research aims, seeking informed consent, to protecting data for maintaining interviewee's confidentiality. To guarantee that the participants had a comprehensive understanding of the purpose and methods used in the study and the demands placed upon them as a participant (Best and Kahn, 2006), the research aim and process was briefed to them verbally. Respondents were given the choice to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. After gaining their compliance to participate, they were asked to sign informed consent forms. The consent form consisted of points such as the participants having the choice to not answer questions that they did not want to and to terminate the interview whenever they felt like. A copy of the form can be found in the appendix of the thesis. The respondents were asked to sign two copies of informed consent form, out of which one was given to them and one was kept by the researcher. Similarly, consent was sought from the interviewee to publish the results of the study while ensuring confidentiality.

Correspondingly, concerning the respondents under 18, consent was also sought from the care takers and respective guardians to involve the respondents in the study. Similarly, following the clarification and breaking down of data collection purpose, ethical considerations were also made in the interview process. Respondents gestures and expressions were carefully observed and in case of a sense of an odd or discomfited situation, topics were changed to ensure that the respondents do not feel uncomfortable.

Debriefing the participant is also an important aspect of ethical consideration. According to Onwueggbuzie, Leech and Collins (2008) debriefing the participants involves the researcher to explain the goals, objectives, purposes, and outcomes of the study, as well as to answer any questions or concerns that the participant might have. Debriefing was considered by the researcher by giving the respondents a platform to bring forth questions at the end of the research. The question can be seen with an attached copy of the interview guideline in the appendix. Following this, the respondents were handed with a copy of the informed consent constituting the email of the researcher and were asked to email any further queries, doubts, comments or complaints if any. Subsequently, in the presentation and analysis of findings, various attempts such as using pseudonyms to replace names and places of residences were made to guarantee that the data is protected, the personal identity of the respondent is not revealed and confidentiality is ensured.

Similarly, one of the important ethical grounds of research is also to view the respondents as important stake holders and to see that the gains of the research also reach their population (Andanda, 2009). In this aspect, it is hoped that the findings of the study will assist concerned stakeholders to take cognizance of their needs and voices so as to improve dimensions of care work with them.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Biographical Information of the respondents

Name	Age	Country of Origin
Abdel	17	Somalia
Abdul	17	Pakistan
Bilal	18	Afghanistan
Hammed	21	Yemen
Hassan	18	Afghanistan
Jahid	20	Afghanistan
Karim	18	Afghanistan
Sameer	18	Afghanistan
Zafar	18	Afghanistan

As can be seen from the table above, the respondents originated from various countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. Among the respondents, two of the respondents were 17 years of age. Likewise, five of the respondents were 18. One respondent was 20 and another one was 21. Among the nine respondents, six originated from Afghanistan, whereas the remaining were from Somalia, Pakistan and Yemen.

4.2 Social Network Composition

The network composition was identified on the basis of personal networks recognised from the focal standpoint of the respondents and from the identification of providers of various dimensions of social support . According to Wellman (1999), personal networks comprise of social ties that young people consider somehow significant in their lives. The networks composition was also facilitated by identifying various support avenues in the minors and young people's lives especially in terms of intangible forms of support such as emotional, appraisal, companionship and informational support. The social network the participants had built in the host country consisted to a large extent of friends who were other unaccompanied minors and youth. Some of the respondents also talked about sharing meaningful relations with care workers, guardians and foster parents. Thus, this section is divided into two segments namely; friendship ties and ties with adults.

4.2.1 Friendship Ties with Other Unaccompanied Children and Youth

When asked about social relations that they perceived as being vital for them and providing them with different avenues of support, almost all participants talked about friendship ties that they had formed with other minors and youths. The following are some of the excerpts from the interviews when asked about diverse avenues of support and personal networks;

> "I have many kind of friends. I am very close with them." (Zafar)

> "I have my friends and I call to them and we go and talk about everything".(Jahid)

> "I met them at school. I feel very close to them. I can even share my secrets with them".(Hammed)

It could be identified that these ties were formed mostly with others who were of the same age group and same gender like themselves. Research shows that people who share similar backgrounds have a higher chance of being connected (McPherson et al., 2011). Standing close to this assumption, Field (1982) states that supportive relations whether it be companionship, instrumental or emotional tends to be age-homophilic. Similarly, McPherson et al., (2011) states that supportive relations not only depend on similar age factor but also on similar gender. The respondents talked about meeting these friends during the migration process, at care homes and at school. According to Kohli (2007), school is an important venue where unaccompanied minors build friendship relationship which help them to construct a sense of stability in their lives. Stretmo (2014) cites Pastoor de Wal (2012), Backlund et al., (2012), and Stretmo and Melander's (2013) research on unaccompanied children in the Norwegian and Swedish school systems. According to their analysis, unaccompanied minors were often described by their teachers and themselves as showing agency and motivation especially in terms of progressing at school and constructing new friendship ties among others .

Wernesjö (2014) explains how unaccompanied minors are identified as a group who have been stripped off of their previous ties in the process of migration and especially of their kinship ties. In this case, their network composition goes in line with what Field (2003) explains as friendship ties emerge as strong ties when family ties become relatively less prominent. In a major study of friendship conducted by Pahl and Spencer (1997) who analyzed data from cohort studies such as the British Household Panel Study, the findings suggests increasing evidence of the growth of friendship relationships. Friend-like behaviour, they argue, "are voluntarily chosen; they are developed not given; and they help to strengthen our own distinctive individuality" (Pahl and Spencer 1997, p. 102). Berndt (1989) postulate that friends offer different types of social support such as emotional and instrumental. The findings from the study also confirms these views as respondents talked about receiving various forms of support and help through these friendship ties.

4.2.3 Ties with Adults: Care workers, Goodman, Foster Parents

While almost all of the respondents talked about friends as being a vital part of their personal network, some of them also talked about having meaningful relationships with adults such as care professionals, legal guardian and foster parents.

Three of the participants talked about care professionals as important part of their social network and providing them with different avenues of support. One of the respondents, Hammed talked about how he feels very close to the care workers in the residential unit and also talks about how they motivate him to go forward. Hammed shares,

> "They are like my family. And they give me energy to go on."

Another respondent, Sameer talked about how his contact person is accessible to him any time and that he feels very close with him. Sameer is very happy with this supportive relationship with his contact person who he considers to be of great importance;

> "My contact person- He always asks me is there any problem? Is there anything you need help with? If there is anything you need help with then tell me, if I am not here call me anytime whether it is day or night time, whatever it is tell me and call me".

Similarly, legal guardian was considered by two of the respondents as being vital people in their lives providing them with different avenues of social support.

> "The best person I met is my Goodman (legal guardian). He is very helpful."(Sameer)

> "My second goodman was from Afghanistan. So she understood my situation and helped me a lot."(Hassan)

Two of the interviewed respondents who were placed in foster families talked highly of their foster parents as providing them with various dimensions of support and being part of their social networks. Zafar talks about his Mathematics teacher who offered to help him during the asylum seeking process and then offered him to stay together with him and his wife. He also addresses him as a Swedish father. He talks about how he values the relationship with them and does not want to move out in the future. He talks about them in the following way;

> "Now I am living in Alingsas here with my Swedish family. He is very kind and I call him like a father, a Swedish father and my other teacher who is my Mathematic teacher I call her like my mother. I have to work somewhere and then at the same time I have to find house which is called Lagenhet (apartment) Yeah! because they are so kind and I really don't want to go from here in another place to be re- placed"

Another respondent, Hassan talks about having very good relationship with his foster parents who he describes as being supportive and helpful. He expressed valuing their relationship and added that them being of same Afghani origin helped a lot in establishing common grounds.

> "The family I living with they are very good and helpful. They are also from Afghanistan, so it's easier"

Similarly another respondent, Jahid talks about how when he was participating in a conference regarding unaccompanied minors , he got an opportunity to meet new people who were interested in his story. He shares his experience of meeting a lady who he now addresses as a Swedish mum;

> "I have also a Swedish mum /mamma. I was in a conference and talked about how it is like to come to Sweden alone and about people who come to Sweden alone. And after the conference, she came to me and asked me my phone number. And she said you are very good people and I will take contact with you and help you to come in Swedish society and yeah. I feel like she is my extra , she is like my mum. She helps me with everything I meet her one or two times a week and yeah and we talk about everything."

These respondents experiences of finding supportive relationships with foster parents and care workers is supported by preceding literature on unaccompanied minors and youths. For example, a study conducted by Luster et al., (2010) among Sudanese refugees in foster care showed that several Sudanese youth reported that having supportive relationships with foster parents and professional workers helped them during the acculturation processes of migrating to a new country. Findings of Williamson's (1998) study focusing on the experiences and wishes of twenty-three asylum seeking young people in the UK suggests that the respondents among others longed for caring adults who made them feel safe and connected them to meaningful

networks as key aspects of support. However, as Wernesjö (2014) points out that it is yet to be properly studied whether these new ties that unaccompanied minors form with friends and care professionals can substitute parental and family relationships that they have left behind in their countries.

4.3 Vital Grounds for relation building in Social Networks

When asked about what the respondents considered as being essential in constructing meaningful relations in these networks, the concept of trust and having common backgrounds emerged as recurrent answers.

4.3.1 Trust

Trust came out as the most common answer when respondents were asked about important factor for building relations. Though the respondents mentioned trust as being a basic relation edifice, they also shared their experience of how forming trusting relations in the beginning is quite hard for multifarious reasons. One of the respondents, Hassan explained how it is very difficult to form trusting relations initially, which in his opinion might take a couple of years. He further explains,

> "From Afghanistan to here, the whole journey we made, there is no one you can trust. The other people who are with us together in the journey, we cannot even trust them. Because it has happened so with many of us that they cheat you and take your money. That's why it takes around 3-5 years. That's why we feel like we cannot trust anyone. It's difficult for us who cannot trust anyone. After 3-5 years, it becomes little easier."

Hassan's quotation lifts up aspects of competition over scarce resources (money) as a hinder to trust formation during the journey. He describes bitter experiences of betrayal that makes it hard for him to trust anyone new in the host country. He also describes the importance of time for building trust. Hassan who has now been in Sweden for almost five years is also an active member of an organization that has been established for other unaccompanied minors who are new to the country. He explains that just like his own past experience, new comers find difficulties in trusting people in the beginning. He explains,

> "Most of them think that all the people are spies from the Immigration and then it becomes very hard."

He then talks about how he tries to console other boys expressing that he has been through a similar experience that he can relate to. He adds that by explaining to them and sharing his own stories and building common grounds it becomes more easier to gain their trust.

Another respondent, Jahid shares a similar view. He shared that in the beginning, he faced many problems but was sceptical to share it with the care workers thinking that they might report it to the immigration board. However, he says that he later opened up to them although placing himself at what looked like a potential risk to him back then;

> "It was very difficult to talk because you are very scared of them. They may go and tell everything to immigration or to other person. But, I took the risk and talked to them."

It can be inferred from the above quotations that some respondents explained about their difficulties in forming trusting relations owing to their own bitter experiences of facing

mistrust in the past or being engulfed in fear that the care workers and other people might report their stories to authorities, in this case, the immigration board. Findings of Chase's (2010) studies with unaccompanied minors and youth in England also suggests that the respondents described feeling under inspection and were thus mistrustful in regards to social workers attempts to get to know them better.

On another note, participants also talked about how trust is a reciprocal bond and that it is as important to feel trusted as to trust. One of the respondents, Zafar sheds light on a similar idea. He talked about how the trust that his foster parents placed on him made him feel very happy. He shared his experience of how his foster parents usually travel during the weekend and leave the house behind in his care. In his opinion, it is a great attainment for him to gain their trust. Similarly, another respondent, Hassan talks about how his foster parents trust him when he tells them about his problems.

> "People don't easily trust others. But they trust me. They tell me to think of the home as my own." (Zafar)

> "It's easier with them. They believe in everything I say. They donot think that I am lying."(Hassan)

These quotations shed light on the importance that respondents placed on being trusted by adults. Indeed, various theorists have highlighted on the concept of trust as being an important dimension for social capital and social network. Fukumaya (1995) defines trust itself as a basic ground of social capital. According to him, "Social capital is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it" (Fukuyama 1995, p. 26). Fukumaya also upholds trust as the very basis of social order, "Communities depend on mutual trust and will not arise spontaneously without it" (1995, p. 25). Field (2003) compares trust and trustworthiness as being lubricants oiling the wheels of a variety of social transactions. According to him, in order for people to cooperate to achieve their goals, they not only need to have some previous knowledge of one another but they also need to trust one another. He also postulates that a high trust network functions more smoothly and effectively than a low trust one.

Similarly, trust also emerged as an important concept not only in the process of relation building but also as important in the process of information flow among members of the social support networks. Like Hassan, Hammed talked about how he thinks it is important to know that the support and advices he gets is coming from someone who has some familiarity with the topic that they are advising about. He says,

> "Whenever new situation arrives, to fix new stuffs, to look for a new job, new flat. I need more support. Not only to get to know the information but also to know that the information that this person has experience of what he is talking."

This corresponds to what Field (2003) talks about trust as being particularly important in respect of assets such as knowledge and information that are relatively intangible and sometimes tactic. In his view, trust in the information transferred and reproduced in social capital is vital in establishing stronger ties.

4.3.2 Common Grounds : similar experience, geographical proximity, same country and language

Many of the respondents talked about building relationships more easily with other minors and youth, acknowledging that they have shared similar experiences with the

migration and asylum process or come from the same country and speak the same language.

4.3.3 Similar experience

To proceed to talk about similar experience, Hammed talks about his friends that he made in school. He further goes on to explain of what stood as vital in their relation;

> "They are from Syria and I met them at school. I feel very close to them. I can even share my secrets with them. The most important thing is that we started together. When I was new in class and was starting, they started together too."

Similarly, another respondent, Jahid talks about a similar situation of how he perceives it easy to form friendship ties with other minors and youth who have to come to Sweden unaccompanied like himself. Hammed, another respondent shares a similar view when talking about his friends;

> "I have friends who are in same situation who come to Sweden alone and so it is very simple to talk to them." (Jahid)
>
> "We share same experience and it makes me very close to them." (Hammed)

From the quotations of Jahid and Hammed, it can be induced that the minors and youth considered sharing similar experiences of the migration and asylum process as being vital grounds for starting friendship ties.

These findings confirms with the findings of a qualitative study conducted by Wells (2011) in England using photo elicitation interviews with eight young refugees to explore their social networks. The findings showed that unaccompanied minors often built friendship networks that linked together home and the journey. They also expressed feeling connected with other minors having similar asylum seeking backgrounds relating to that they had travelled similar journeys and undergone similar situations.

4.3.4 Geographical Proximity

Close Geographical proximity was pointed out as a vital ground by one of the respondents .Hammed adds when talking about his friends,

> "They live very close to me and it makes me easier to contact them ."

This quotation can be linked to what Granovetter (1973) has argued that, diverse types of support including emotional support may be offered through a secure, close and long lasting relationship with someone who lives outside one's immediate physical environment. Granovetter's (1973) idea of 'one's immediate physical environment' can be linked to what Mohammed considers living 'close' to his friends which in his opinion makes it easier to contact them in times of needed support.

However, divergent to this view, others talked about friendship bonds continuing even after dispersing into different geographical areas. Many of the respondents, even after leaving the care homes and shifting into other places, still preferred to stay in contact with other unaccompanied minors and youth that they had become friends with. Hassan shares,

"They are still friends. And I visit them when I have vacations. They cannot visit me here because I have a small room so I go and visit them ".

Friends who they met on the journey to Sweden were also considered by one respondents to be valuable. And though they had scattered in different countries, the respondent showed agency in looking for them, establishing and maintaining contact. Jahid shares,

" I travelled with other young people who was from Afghanistan and who talked Darri and you be friends on way. I am in contact with only one, who lives in Holland/ Netherland. I search and find him on facebook. So I was there 2012 in Netherland. I visited him in 2012 and we talked about the way ".

Jahid shares his experience of how he was successful in finding a friend that he had made during the journey. He explains that they established contact and he visited him and talked about the journey when they met. Horst (2006) talks about how new technology enables migrants to maintain transnational ties through regular and affordable communication. In addition to such electronic socializing, White and Ryan (2008) talks about how cheap travel allows migrants to make short visits to friends and relatives.

4.3.5 Same country and Language

The social networks of almost all the respondents consisted of other minors and youths that originated from the same country as theirs and spoke the same language. Knowing people from the same country who speak the same language was considered as important by many youths. One of the respondent, Sameer shares his experience of living in a camp after his arrival to Sweden;

"When I was in the camp, I had no idea. I mean there weren't many of our people from Afghanistan. There was just one boy. It was difficult for me. But when I shifted to Alingsas, then I met many Afghani guys. Almost all of them were from Afghanistan. So I met them and talked to them and felt very happy."

Sameer contrast his situation before and after meeting friends from Afghanistan. This also confirms with Well's (2011) findings that the unaccompanied minors and youths in her study were close friends with people who they met in host country but were originally from their home country or countries close to their own country of origin. Similarly, another respondent Hassan, explained about how both his foster parents being from Afghanistan makes it easier to express himself;

"My Abbu (father in Urdu), he helps me a lot. He even lend me some money when my family needed help. He understands the situation in Afghanistan".

Another respondent Hammed shares of how he tries to find if there are people from his own country whenever he comes across people who speak the same language;

"Whenever I meet someone who speaks Arabic, I ask have you met any Yemenese or am I the first one to meet or you know where they are etc"

These quotations shed light on the importance that unaccompanied minors and youth place in building relations with others who come from the same country of same language, sometimes, actively showing agency in searching for them . This goes in line with what Putnam (2007) talks about bonding (or 'exclusive') social capital which

states that people often build social networks with others from a similar sociological niche which tends to strengthen exclusive identities and homogenous groups. Lin (2001), another theorist of social capital, who distinguishes these ties as 'strong ties', further states that these ties bind people with others similar to themselves. In this line, it can be inferred that these unaccompanied minors and youth form bonding social capital with other youths and people from the same country which assisted them in receiving various kinds of support.

4.4 Factors Impeding Relationship Building in Social Networks

When analyzing the data to identity various factors perceived by respondents as impeding relation building, lack of long lasting ties, experiences of mistrust, difficulties in building friendship with Swedish youth and professional boundaries emerged as basic concepts.

4.4.1 Shifting Movements and lack of long lasting ties

The respondents in the interviews at different instances highlighted on various aspects of social support that they received from various network avenues such as that of friends, social workers, care professionals and foster families. However, one of the factors that could be identified was that they seemed to experience a recurrent change of support systems and networks as they moved on from one transitional care house to another, shifting schools, localities and often leaving the circle of newly built networks of friends and care workers behind. One of the respondents, Karim, proceeds to talk about his situation,

> " I am changing friends all the time."

Karim is one of the respondents who talks about how his movement from one care house to another resulted in the contact he lost with the new friends he made. The Swedish system of reception entails that the municipalities are primarily responsible for the reception and care of unaccompanied minors during the asylum seeking process (Carlier et al.,). A positive decision which results in the issuing of a residence permit that facilitates their status change (from asylum applicant to refugee or recipient of protection) and can influence how he is accommodated and structure other factors such as moving to another residential care (ibid.). In fact, these changes in accommodation could be seen as affecting the friendship ties of many respondents. It could be seen that many respondents often built new friendships in these transitional houses which were later disrupted as they shifted into other care units. Another respondent, Abdul explains,

> " The first placed I lived in, there were Afghani ,Somali , African all mixed. I made friends but I don't have anything with them now"

Likewise, another respondent , Jahid shares his experience of leaving a residential unit and moving into an apartment,

> "In the beginning I did not feel very well because I have lived with seventeen or sixteen young people together and it was like my family. I say that they were people like my brothers and sisters and we were very close. We talked all time and we had some activities go to cinema watch some movie and go play football together and go and swimming so. And when I move into my own apartment, in the beginning I feel alone every time and it was very hard to. So it took a long time and now it is..I feel ok.. but sometimes I feel alone and I am missing this time I lived in the house".

Similarly another respondent, Sameer shares a similar experience of leaving his previous care home and shifting to an individual apartment. Likewise, another respondent, Abdel shares of some of the causes acting as push factors for him to leave his foster placement.

> "When I first came here, it felt very strange. In the previous house, there were nine or ten people we used to spend our daily life with. But now I am alone." (Sameer)

> " I firstly lived with a lady for six to seven months but then I could not live with her any longer. I could not communicate with her so well. And she had lots of pets , dogs, and big snakes which I was scared of." (Abdel)

Sameer's comment explains how he feels lonely at times as the shifting of housing has placed him on a different living setting unlike his previous living arrangement in the company of other friends. Correspondingly, Abdel shares of also having to leave a care arrangement by perceiving various difficulties. It can be seen from the quotations that respondents often changed living settings. Putnam (2000) states that frequent movers have weaker community ties. Accordingly, Mok and Wellman (2007) state that the provision of social support in personal communities decreases with increasing of spatial distance between individuals which is affected by the reduction in the frequency of meetings in physical co-presence. Vernberg et al., (2006) examined the effect of relocation to a new community on intimacy and companionship in adolescent friendships. Their findings suggests that youths who were relocated experienced a lower level of intimacy and companionship in their friendships compared to youths who remained residentially stable. Kohli (2014) addresses to the condition of this group of children and young people as "already saturated with movements, challenges arise of how to feel temporarily at home in contingent spaces where their sense of entitlement to remain and make a life is curtailed". (Kohli, 2014, p. 94)

4.4.2 Experiences of Mistrust and Suspect

The concept of mistrust was lifted up by many participants when being asked about what they considered as hindrances and challenges countering their experiences with different support avenues .The respondents shared their experiences of being mistrusted, suspected and treated with misbelief at different phases after arrival and especially during the asylum seeking process.

Zafar shares his experience with the immigration board when he first arrived to Sweden,

> " I was in Miera for about five months and then, I got my first rejections answers from the immigration office and then they said because you are talking like a man, you are behaving like a man , like a real man and not like a child and then I said to them, O.k. I don't wanna play, I don't want to be like a child. It's me and I don't like to play like a child to cry, to break the bowl. it's my habit"

During the interview, on another instance, he brought up the issue again and further added on how being suspected on his age of being a minor made him feel:

> " It's a shame for me. If you were in Afghanistan , about 10 years, they want to call you like a man. You have to take responsibility for a family. You have to feed a family and here in Sweden, even when you are about 20-25, you are still staying here and still you donot know who are you. It's true."

Zafar's answers stresses on the fact of what he thinks of his bringing up in Afghanistan required him to behave like a "man" at an earlier age and to take responsibilities for the family which in his view is distinct from other youths in Sweden. Another respondent, Hassan shares,

> " The personnel thought that I used to be lying about not knowing the whereabouts of my family. They used to think if other boys know that their families are in Iran, how is it possible that you donot know. That 's why I did not talk to the boys and those who used to work there, hardly. Almost two or three months I lived there the boys probably used to think, why is this boy not talking to anyone and always stays alone. So it was for very difficult for me, both with them and with the workers".

He goes to further to talk about mistrust faced in the immigration board,

> " A lot of problems is created in the immigration board with us about our age. They think that look at a boy here who is sixteen and look at you guys, there is a sky and earth difference. And then we say, when we are in Afghanistan, from the day we are born, and almost when we get big, when we start moving and can do things, our mother and father tell us to work. We don't go to school so much and we donot have all the facial creams and that for the skin that you have here. We have become big and grown in the mud ,that's why you think we are big. And then they don't believe what we say and lots of problems are created"

Stretmo (2014) states that unaccompanied minors are often met with doubt about their claim of being underage. According to her, the implementation of being under 18 for asylum seeking unaccompanied minors is taken as extremely important in official practice .She states that Sweden makes use of the analysis of behaviour and appearance markers in order to distinguish the adult subjects from the children and asylum seekers are often met with disbelief amid these techniques.

Similarly, other recent studies show that in media and in official documents, unaccompanied minors are often presented as either traumatized children or as economic migrants who present themselves as minors when they in fact are young adults looking for work (Stretmo, 2014). This points to a distrust regarding immigrant's reasons for migrating, and predetermined ideas about migrant children and unaccompanied minors. Findings of Silove and Ekblad's (2002) longitudinal studies looking at resettlement for quota refugees in North America and Australia state that often the ambiance of distrust and hostility towards refugees generally and asylum seekers can lead to a heightened sense of feeling unsettled about their present and future context.

Engebrigsten (2012 in Stretmo, 2014) talks about unaccompanied minors are often being positioned as subjects situated outside of childhood, as some of their experience for instance like that of being separated from family and social ties, working instead of going to school and surviving distressing situations are considered as conflicting the impression of children and normal childhood as upheld by many. Indeed, the experiences of the interviewed youth and minors seemed to highlight on how they had to diverge from the picture of *normal childhood* and take responsibilities at an early age. In fact, it could be identified that their journey itself was initiated out of responsibility towards their family. Similarly, one of the common feature that could be identified in all the respondents was that they were the eldest son of the family and thus perceived themselves as the responsible heads for their families. The following excerpts shed light on the topic;

" It was difficult to live there. And then, my mother told that we cannot live here. Because I am their eldest son and that's why all the all the responsibilities were mine, after my father. And that is why my mother told me you can move out of here. It is better for us and also for you". (Hassan)

"And my father had made me promise that you are the elder, you are the leader now you must take care of the family. And after that when I was asked will you go out, I said yes because I had to protect my family. Now, I am trying to help them with the passport so they can come here. But it depends on the people of the embassy in Iran. If they want they can give it or if they don't want they don't give it. I am worried about that. I have my brothers. If when they are out in the street someone sees them and know they are from Afghanistan, they can kill him. They are all hiding so I am thinking for them all the time."(Karim)

"I just wanna save my money for a day that I should say them it's my plan in the summer I want to fly to Quoita and help them yes of course. They donot have anybody without me." (Zafar)

It can be inferred from the above quotations that some of the respondents maintained transnational ties with their families back home and they often engaged in supporting families with various resources especially instrumental assistance. These transnational ties could be seen as offering platform to bridge two spaces surpassing different borders (Faist, 2000). Going in line with this, Engebrigsten (2012 in Stretmo, 2014) states that unaccompanied children and youngsters continue to act as responsible family members catering to some of the needs of the family even post settlement in a host country.

4.4.3 Difficulties in building friendship with Swedish Youth

During the interviews, respondents at many occasions highlighted about the importance of having Swedish friends to improve their language among other reasons and also expressed their wish to have more Swedish friends. However, correspondingly, they also shared their experiences in the difficulties of mixing up and building friendship with Swedish youths.

Hassan shares his experience of not being able to mix up with Swedish youths at school. He talks of what he and his friends perceived as Swedish youths trying to maintain a distance with them at school.

"I started school almost a month after I came. There were problems there too so my heart wasn't there, dint feel like it. There were Swedish boys and girls but they dint want to come close to us. It was very hard for us. When they were sitting in one place and if we were also going near, they used to leave. Then we asked the director why it was happening like this. And they try to tell us that maybe it's because we come from countries that there are more criminals ,they fear us. Things like this makes us very angry. If we were criminals what would we be doing here? All those criminals who are in Pakistan or Afghanistan, they don't have the need to come here!"

Hassan's comments stresses on how his other unaccompanied friends and himself faced difficulties of feeling distanced and not being able to mix up with other Swedish youths. Corresponding to this, is a study conducted by Chase (2010) in England to uncover the experiences of fifty four unaccompanied asylum seeking minors and young people mainly to study about the factors perceived as positively or negatively impacting their emotional well being. Respondents of her study also reflected on facing various forms of stigmatisation in relation to being labelled as asylum seekers from the native people and media. Jahid shares a somewhat similar experience,

"It was very hard because I could not speak Swedish. Then when I moved to Gothenburg, I began to play football with a Swedish football team and there I try to speak Swedish whole time

so yeah but I could not get some Swedish friends there. I don't know why it was very difficult for me. And I try to get some Swedish friends in school that is also very difficult"

Ali shares a comparable experience,

> "I had thought of making new friends after I got here. It's hard. I have Afghani friends I don't have any Swedish friends."

The above quotations draw attention to the experience of some of the respondents of failing to build friendship ties with other Swedish youths despite their effort. The reasons for it could not be widely discussed with all three participants. However, one respondent explains of how he perceived Swedish youths as maintaining distance with him and his friends because of reasons of being scared with them. The quotations encapsulates their difficulties in forming 'bridging networks' with other Swedish Youth. Putnam (2000) postulates that bridging networks provide better linkage to external assets and information diffusion and generates broader identities and reciprocity. In this case, these benefits of bridging networks especially practicing and improving Swedish language as they voice out might be limited to this group of minors and youth as they experience being isolated from their Swedish counterparts. OECD report from 2014 highlights that language skills are an essential prerequisite in the ability of the foreign-born to form networks with the native-born population and search for a job. In this line, poor knowledge of the host country's language and finding difficulties to practice language with native speakers could place the minors and youth on a vicious cycle of being isolated at different levels.

4.4.4 Cultural Gaps

Some of the respondents talked about their experience with care workers and especially their perception of them as not having enough information about various aspects of their culture such as their food and regarding ways they should be treated. Hassan shares his experience ,

> " In the place I was before, it was not so good. The workers did not think like which culture do they come from ? what is there tradition? what have happened with them before? how should we behave with them? they only did like what is in the Swedish system. It was very hard for us. And I also had a good man then. A girl of around 23 years, even she didn't know how to behave or how to talk to me"

At another instance, he goes on to talk about how he and other boys from the camp faced problems regarding the food served in the care unit.

> " Those of us in Afghanistan also in Iran and Pakistan we have all the food together with a bread, naan. If that bread is not there we feel like there is nothing to eat. And when we used to tell them that we need this bread, they used to say, 'This is Swedish food, we do not need to eat this with bread'".

Bilal, another respondent shares a similar encounter ,

> "Here the food they serve is not good. We have some spices in our food and they don't so it doesn't feel so nice to eat this food."

Corresponding to the experiences of the respondents in this study, a phenomenological study conducted by Luster et al., (2010) examining 18 young adults experience with foster families, seven years after resettlement, revealed that nearly half of them changed

placements because of relationship difficulties with their foster parents especially because of misunderstandings based on cultural differences which often lead to exacerbating conflicts. Similarly, regarding the concept of dissatisfaction with food that was brought up respondents goes in line with what Kohli (2007) also talks about as being one of the recurring concerns of unaccompanied minors but also being a topic that has not been focused too much about. Kohli, Connolly and Warman (2010) describes food as being important for unaccompanied minors in terms of implying welcome and safety. According to Stretmo (2014), working effectively with unaccompanied children requires knowledge about the children's own experiences and their everyday strategies. Correspondingly, Backlund et al., (2012 in Stretmo 2014) highlights that social services in Sweden often become quite limited in delivering diverse forms of support to this group of children due to its limited working experience in the field.

4.4.5 Rules and Professional Boundaries

From the responses of various interviewees, it could be identified that the minors and youth did not want to be bounded with numerous rules. One of the respondents, Abdul talks about how one of the main reasons for him to leave his foster home and return back to his previous residential care unit was because his foster family had set up some regulations that did not suit his preferences. He further explains,

> "They told me that I had to be home before nine pm every day. It's not possible for me. Sometimes I go out with friends. I will feel like I am locked up. Here I can go and come with a little more hours. Now I am back and I feel free ".

It can be seen that Abdul's motivation to leave the foster family among other reasons was because the family had set up some regulations for him which he did not feel at ease with. However, he compares it to the residential unit which he sees as being a little bit more flexible regarding such set rules.

Findings of Stretmo and Melander 's (2013 in Wernesjö 2014) study on unaccompanied minors and youth could add more light into this dimension. In the study, they identified various approaches used by social workers and care takers to explain how the children are seen and treated. With one of the approaches adopted, they states that unaccompanied children and young people are often seen as deviant and thus care workers and care takers often focus on creating and maintaining rules and boundaries for these children and young people concerned.

Another respondent Hassan, talks about a similar experience of how being amidst rules made him and his friends feel. He recalls of his experience of living in a previous residential house,

> " We used to find everything that the workers said to be hurting. Because they used to act like when we say this you have to do this. And that was very hard for us. When we were watching T.V. they used to tell us , ' No times up now! You have to sleep'. Even if there was just five minutes left to the show they used to tell us to close it right away. And this used to make all of us very angry "

He then goes on to comparing this experience with that of another care worker who used to work for summer as being different,

" And this person who used to work for summer- he was different. When he was working he also used to tell us it's time to sleep but if we told him there is five or ten minutes left, he used to say, 'Ok you guys watch it and I will wait with you'. We never had any problems with him"

Similarly professional boundaries was another concept that emerged in the interviews. As previously discussed in other sections, respondents seemed to share good ties with care workers. However, it could also be seen that their experiences had also brought them to face some professional boundaries. Hammed shares his experience,

"The first place I lived in when I first arrived, there were many employers there. And it wasn't difficult to be comfortable there. And I told them a lot of things about me and that I want to be..like to keep contact with them after moving out. They dint say anything maybe didn't want to upset me maybe they didn't know how to tell . Maybe they didn't want to make me feel sad. But I met one of the workers, I met him outside later and he told me that I can come and visit the old house but our rule says and it makes it bit difficult to meet ex tenants but you can come here and visit us"

Hammed who is in the also in process of soon leaving the care unit to an independent apartment further voices out,

"But for me I would like to have an open contact with workers even after I move out "

These vignettes of quotes sheds light on the experience of unaccompanied minors in the care of various care units and foster families that are often run within a fixed boundary of rules and professional regulations. Hasenfeld (2010) talks about obligations faced by human service organizations whereby professionals have to follow structured guidelines and rules when addressing a situation. Similarly, Rose (1999, p. 150) states that "formal organisations are rule bound and cannot have the same flexibility and sensitivity of informal network". Correspondingly, Backlund et al., (2012 in Stretmo, 2014) have also analyzed how despite the provision of many officials and social support staffs provided by the social services in Sweden, such as care unit staff, teachers, guardians, social workers and foster parents, it is debatable and paradoxical if anyone has or will take over parental responsibility for them in their everyday life. This situation can be seen as bridging the needs of the respondents as wanting more flexible support and continued relations as opposed to the professionals own obligations of abiding to structural rules and time constraints.

4.5 The Role of Social Networks

4.5.1 Link to expanding social ties

Many of the respondents talked about how their network members assisted in helping them to get to know new people and expand their social circle. Jahid shares his experience of how his Swedish mum helped him introduce to other Swedish families. In his words,

" She helps me with everything and I have also got contact with other Swedish family through her. The Swedish family helped me with my driver's license."

Another respondent Abdel shared his experience of how through his friends at the mosque, he came into contact with other people from Somalia who are now residing in Sweden. He shares,

"We celebrate many festivals together we have the same religion, if someone I know has a wedding they invite us. We don't know them directly I know someone who know them and that's good. I get to meet them "

One of the respondents, Karim talked about not knowing the whereabouts of his family after the journey. He then goes on to explain how his friend helped him come in contact with other people from Afghanistan and Iran through a Mosque who later helped him relocate his family. He explains,

"After I came to Gothenburg I came to find about a mosque with my Afghan friend . There were more people from Afghanistan and Iran. And there was a lady who was travelling to Iran so she said she will help me. She took my photo and asked for people in Iran if there was any family looking for me. And one day, one of them knew my mother so then I could get in contact with her. You know after one year or almost fifteen months I finally found them."

From these quotations, it can be inferred as to how social networks of the respondents helped them broaden their social ties serving to various purposes such as expansion of network, and relocating family back home. This goes in line with Ryan et al., (2008) who state that social networks often help in serving various purposes; one of them being, expanding bonds and socializing. Similarly, Portes (1995) talks about how migrant networks act as a key element in facilitating community formation. Indeed, it can be seen that the respondents underwent similar help of being linked to either bigger diasporic communities or socializing and forming new ties when faciltatated by their network members.

4.5.2 Practicing Diasporic Activities: A pathway to bridge the past and the present

Majority of the respondent talked about practicing various forms of diasporic activities such as celebrating festivals from the home country and preparing food from homeland when in the company of their network members originating from the same country.

Most of respondents talked about celebrating festivals such as Eid along with their friends of same ethnic origin. Similarly they also talked about preparing food from their country. Jahid shares,

"When we meet, we watch a movie and cook Afghan food".

Similarly, another respondent Sameer shares with great excitement,

" I go to my friends house in weekends and they make very good food for me. They prepare Biryani. In Pakistan you get really good Biryani and then when they make it here, it tastes the same".

Likewise, another respondent, Zafar shares of how he plays Afghani instruments with his friends. He shares,

"Most of the time we meet, we just play Dombra, it's an instrument, singing and yeah".

Studies show that refugee children and adolescents after migration often face a dilemma in balancing between integration into the host society and disintegration from the society left behind (Kohli, 2007). As an effect, this acculturation process can often produce acculturative stress (Williams and Berry, 1991), resulting from the problems engendered when children work to adapt to their original cultures to those of a new host country (Aronowitz, 1984; Gil and Vega, 1996). The acculturation process can also

leave a major void in one's life, resulting from the loss of contact with traditional values and ways of living (Ajdukovic and Ajdukovic, 1998). DeBerry and Boyden (2000) also talk about this as a double disadvantaged situation for migrants as their position places them away from belonging to their community of origin while also not being able to find a new position in the host country which sometimes can be aggravated by rejection from the host community. However, the respondents experiences from this study suggest that unaccompanied minors and youth often spend time with their friends engaging in diasporic activities such as cooking food from the homeland and celebrating festivals from home countries that often helped them to bridge the past and the present by providing avenues of continuation of diverse aspects of their culture. Brightwell (2012) is of the opinion that migrants everyday practices such as preparing and consuming food from their home countries enable them to reconstruct and communicate their diasporic identities and can also assist in restabilising feelings of belongingness.

4.5.3 Influencing Value Changes and Integration

Many of the respondents talked about perceiving social networks and a flexible social environment as influencing previous value changes. The rights to be respected as humans and the avenues to voice out their opinion freely were voiced as many as being vital changes post migration and in the company of supportive members. In the words of one of the respondent, Karim,

> " Here in Sweden, I have learnt a lot. In Sweden what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong. It's not that if you are Sia or Sunni you are wrong. To be something is not wrong. Here they respect everyone. To lie is wrong, to do bad is wrong but being someone is not wrong like Sia or Sunni. You see from friends you make here and from people you meet. When you have come here, you must change. That's what I think. Keep the good and leave the bad."

Similarly, another respondent, Hassan shares,

> " I never was interested in religion so much- in being a Sia or in being a Muslim. Because from the time I was small, everyday there used to be the same problems. The Sia and Sunni used to kill each other and I used to feel like if there was no Sia or no Sunni then so many people would not have died. But I could not tell this to anyone. At one time, I told this to my father and he said it's not wrong for me that you are saying this, but this is wrong if you tell it to others. If you tell this to anyone else outside then they will kill you, not just you but our family just because you said this. But now I can tell this to anyone, if anyone asks me what I think about Mazab or what I think about Islam, I tell them what I think. I am not scared"

The environment of expression perceived as safe from supportive friends by Karim and by Hassan seems to have assisted them to express their opinions freely. Some of the respondents shared that their Swedish friends and foster parents helped them improve their Swedish language. Many of the respondents acknowledged language as being an important factor to become successful in the Swedish society. Zafar explains that he made some effort to learn Swedish with his foster parents. He shares,

> "After I found my Swedish family, when I went there I had to, I forced myself to talk in Swedish, I asked them about the names of things about how to communicate with the people"

He also shares of how in the absence of a proper grip with the language, he perceived many difficulties in knowing about the Swedish system. In his words,

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> "In the beginning when I came in Sweden , it's hard for me because I could not speak in Swedish and I couldn't understand but I was able to talk in English and then I asked many people who come to work in Sweden, how is the rule and regulation in Sweden, how to be as a part of the community in Sweden."

However, in the difficulty of finding and building friendship ties with Swedish friends and other native Swedes, one of the respondents mentioned how he talks Swedish even with his Somali friends by perceiving it very important to improve their Swedish.

> "With my Somali friends also I speak in Swedish. It is very important to improve Swedish if you want to do good here. "

This study at different levels of discussion show how even despite of showing agency, minors and youth often experience failure in building 'bridging ties' with other native Swedish youth. Backlund et al., (2012 in Wernesjö, 2014) study state that unaccompanied children often expressed difficulties in getting to know Swedish-born children and youth . They also state that the Swedish language seems to be the key and the main criterion for inclusion in the Swedish imagined community. However, in the absence of these bridging ties to practice Swedish language, one respondent shares of making use of 'bonding ties' with friends from same country to practice a new language so as to help each other in improving their fluency. One of the respondents shared his experience of learning Swedish table etiquette from his Swedish friends which he perceived as being quite different from the one in his home country. Karim shares,

> " And with my Swedish friends I learn a lot. First time, when we went out to eat. I copied them you know. In Afghanistan we also have fork but we mostly eat with spoon. But here there is a fork and a knife. So I looked at them closely and did what they did. They took the fork first and I did that too. It is a new culture".

From this quotation, it can be inferred how bridging capital can produce new resources. One of the respondents Hassan, talked about how his foster father helped him understand how the Swedish system works by explaining the do's and don'ts of the system. These quotations encapsulate the experience of unaccompanied minors and youth as receiving various forms of support from their network members that served diverse purposes of expressing themselves freely, learning a new language , learning new etiquettes and learning about the system of the host country.

4.5.4 Providing Support to deal with stress, adding meaning to everyday life

During the interviews, many of the respondents portrayed rather grim images of the past mainly of situations that counteracted as push factors to leave their home countries. Similarly, they also talked about the difficulties faced in the journey till their arrival to Sweden. Respondents talked about both being witness to and being direct victims of various kinds of violence prior leaving and while travelling.

Even though the research questions did not aim at asking the children and youth about their past experiences before arrival to Sweden, they often connected their current situation to different linking events of the past. It could be perceived that these vignettes lied fresh in many of their memories till now and especially after their arrival to Sweden. Karim, one of the respondents shares his experience after arriving to Sweden,

> "I thought that they would follow me here."

When asked about who he refers to as "they" he talked about the Taliban forces that were active in his country. He further went on to share about how the militants of the force killed his father and was later after his own life too. In his words,

> " You know in Afghanistan , they had killed my father. Right in front of me they killed him with a pistol. They shot him. Later, they were looking for me too. But my mom hid me in the animals house. They take young boys to join the army or use in killing themselves in places with bombs "

In another instance , he again shared how this memory and similar other pictures of the past keeps flashing back to him.

> "In Afghanistan there is like five caste- Shia, Sunni. And if they are Shia, then they want to kill Sunni. I dream sometimes that people are after me to kill me and I wake up and think. Why me? Why am I born Shia? and why others Sunni? I think I want this answer. What is wrong being born a Shia? "

Similarly, another respondent, Hassan at many instances talked about his memories from Afghanistan. The following excerpt talks about one such recall of the past. He shares,

> "There were many problems in Afghanistan. There is something called Hazara Nation and with those people, they are selected and taken out of the buses one by one and there used to be target killing. One day there was also a bombing in a school in Quoita and my brother and sister were badly injured. It was very difficult there. It is the same till now "

These quotations show that often images of the past keep coming back to the minors and youths who have previously faced rough situations. Stretmo (2014) mentions that unaccompanied minors are often understood as having experienced terrible torments in their country of origin owing to have witnessed and experienced traumatic ordeals. Encompassed under various difficult ordeals can also threaten the emotional well-being for unaccompanied children and youth and can put them at a high risk of developing PTSD and depression (Derulyn and Brokaert, 2008; Wernesjö 2014). However, in the presence of supportive ties, respondents expressed feeling safer. Karim shares his own experience of how receiving support from a social worker helped him feel safer. In his words,

> "After I got here and the social worker asked me if I wanted to go to school. I was very scared . I felt like people followed me here and will kill me. But the social worker told me that she would follow me to school if I was scared. She said if you want I can follow you to school. Then I felt safe that I am safe here".

It can be inferred from the quotation that social support received from supportive network members made the respondent feel safer while counteracting some form of stress that he was facing. This goes in line with what Cohen & Wills (1985) talk about the 'buffering hypothesis' of social support that focuses on the idea that social support is mainly needed to protect people from the negative effects of stressful life events. According to their explanation, support intercedes between the stressful event and a stress response by attenuating or preventing a stress appraisal response. That is, the perception that others will assist with needed resources might help them reformulate the potential for harm posed by a situation and strengthen their ability to cope with imposed demands, thus preventing a particular situation from being recognized as highly stressful. Secondly, they state that adequate support may intervene between the experience of stress and the onset of the pathological outcome by reducing or eliminating the stress reaction. In the case of Karim, the 'buffering' function of social

support can be seen as serving to the latter mentioned purpose. Similarly other respondents shared about feeling motivated and happy in the presence of supportive ties. The following quotations shed light on the area;

> "I think it is very important the support I get from the staffs and employers here. They give me the energy. And they make me feel like if I achieve something and happy they will also be happy for my sake. It keeps me going " (Hammed)

> "I am very happy where I am" (Abdel)

> "Now I am very happy with the Afghani family I live with. I have no complains".(Hassan)

From the quotations it can be induced that respondents expressed feeling happy, stable and motivated admits supportive and meaningful ties. This goes in line with Cohen and Wills's (1985) idea of the 'main effect' hypothesis of social support which in their view assists people in recognizing their self worth and helps them to maintain a state of stability and predictability.

4.6 Lack of perceived support and Silence

Among all the interviewees, the two respondents views seemed to diverge to a great extent from other respondents who talked of forming strong social bonds with at least more than two people. Abdul and Bilal describe how their experience was of not having and receiving any considerable form of supportive relations. Abdul talks about how he feels;

> "I don't really speak with anyone. I stay in my room alone. I like that. I don't have anything with anyone. I don't believe in anyone that yes if I tell something to them then I will get some help. It does not help me. But I don't talk to anyone. "

On being prompted with other questions of social support, he persisted that he does not consider having any meaningful relationship with anyone in the host country and that the only person that matters to him is his mother back in Pakistan. Like the children in McLeod's study cited in (Welbourne, 2012), Abdul pointed out a similar view that authentic listening was not only about active listening, but also about being able to take actions about what has been heard. Abdul perceives that even telling his stories to anyone would not lead to any helpful actions beneficial to him.

One of the other respondents, Bilal talks about the difficulty in building friendship and meaningful relations in the care unit he lives in. He says that he comes to Gothenburg to meet some Afghani boys that he knows. He explains however, that he does not really think of them as friends in real terms. He explains,

> " These friends, I have realized are only friends for the name sake"

This corresponds to what Gottlieb (1981) talked about how the existence of a circle of friends and relatives does not always mean that support is always available and imminent. Similarly, Bilal's perception of his friends as 'friends for the name sake' can be linked to his perception of lack of 'perceived support' which Streeter & Franklin (1992) views as a cognitive appraisal of one's connections to others. They state that measures of perceived social support states that not all connections between individuals and their environment result in the production of social support. Even if the probability

exists for a particular relationship to generate expressions of support, it is not likely to do so unless it is perceived as available or adequate to meet the need of the individual (Cohen and Hoberman, 1983; Procidano and Heller, 1983; Turner, Frankel, and Levin, 1983). However, he adds that in their company he perceives time as moving faster which otherwise is very difficult for him;

> "When I am with them, time goes very fast. When I am with anyone, time goes fast. For example, right now I am talking to you, time goes fast because I am talking. When I am alone, time does not go by for me. It's very difficult. One hour seems like three /four hours for me. "

He further shared how in the face of loneliness shadowed by the lack of supportive companionship, he tends to reflect and contrast upon his life in Afghanistan to what it is now.

> "Afghanistan is a country where there is no peace. When you go out in the morning from your home to the market, no one will know if you will come back alive or not. And then it is Sweden. Compared to that, it's better from Afghanistan. What happens in Afghanistan, killing Sias, killing Muslims, all of that is not here but here when I think you are away from your friends and away from your family alone here, the brain of people- it can go bad. And I think it has happened the same with me. Not just me I have seen a lot of other boys who sit alone and talk to themselves. I used to think that they have gone mad. I think if it goes on like this for me, it will be very hard."

Following this, it was asked if during these times, he feels comfortable to share these thoughts with the care workers or other boys living in the care unit. He answered saying no and because of a discomfited situation perceived by the researcher, the topic was changed and further questions in the matter were not asked.

The experience shared by Abdul and Bilal highlight upon how they perceive the situation of lacking supportive ties as not being beneficial. Cohen and Willis (1985) state that social support and supportive ties are necessary in everyday life as it helps people to attach meaning to their everyday life which in its absence might lead for people to feel the opposite of the affore mentioned.

Another Respondent, Karim shared about how he perceives support from care workers and friends as being ready to offer him help if needed. However, he talks about keeping his stories to himself as he feels like sharing his problems might make other people sad.

> "I know they would help me. But I don't want to worry anyone. It's like if I tell you I have this problem and this problem and that, you will be sad hearing my problem too. So I don't want that. I don't want to make anyone sad with my problems "

In the experience of Karim, he perceives support as forthcoming. However, he chooses to remain silent in order to not burden anyone with his problems. This goes in line with what Kohli (2007) talks about how unaccompanied minors are noted at times to times to be silent or cautious about sharing about their circumstances and origin when faced with power figures, including social workers. He is of the view that the choices they make about talking or not talking can hinder or facilitate resettlement in various ways. According to him, these children might have been instructed by their families of origin to not reveal facts to others and thus are present as polite yet troubled individuals who are apprehensive about safely talking to others. However, little is known about why and how unaccompanied minors maintain a closed book about their lives (Kohli, 2007).

There are diverse views and assumptions of researchers as to why this group of children are noted to stay silent at times. Ayotte and Williamson's (2001) study assessing the

lives of refugee children in the UK leads them to state that "their psychological needs are not catered for and they may continue to suffer in silence or act out their grief or pain inappropriately" (Ayotte and Williamson, 2001, p. 21). Green's (2000) research with unaccompanied minors in Denmark notes that at times asylum-seeking and refugee children carry "unclear losses" (2000, p. 4), in the sense of not knowing how the people that they have left behind are living their lives, or whether there is any point in hoping for a possible reunion and may stay silent as a way to deal with these losses. Kohli (2007) puts forward that silences and limited talking can also be attributed to autonomy as part of becoming independent and growing up. However, he also states that within the narrative related to refugee children, these developmental routes are not given much attention to and silence and secrets are more attributed to the processes of becoming refugees.

Both confirming and diverging from the findings of different researchers, the views of some of the respondent in the study shows that minors and youth sometimes stay silent by perceiving no possible help in return or by perceiving the non existence of supportive relations whereas at other times they might stay silent so as not to burden others with their own problems and to show autonomy in dealing with them on their own.

5. Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The study was set out to explore the experiences of unaccompanied youths especially in terms of forming new social networks in Sweden. The main aim of the study was to find out how the respondents build social networks, the vital factors responsible for enhancing or impeding social relations and the role of these networks in their daily lives.

The findings of the study suggest that unaccompanied minors and youth usually build social networks with other minors and youth, mostly coming from the same countries. These networks were based on friendship ties with others who were usually of the same gender and similar age like themselves. The respondents talked about meeting these friends during the migration process, at schools and at care homes. Similarly, some of the respondents also talked about forming meaningful relations with adults such as care professionals , legal guardians and foster parents.

Trust was one of the concept that came recurrently in different parts of the study as the respondents shared their experience of what they considered as being an essential edifice for relation building. They talked about the importance of trust, both in terms of being able to trust others as well as being able to be trusted by others. Respondents shared their challenges of forming trusting relations in the beginning especially with care workers. They talked about facing difficulties in trusting professionals being sceptical that sharing their stories might end up getting them reported to the immigration board. They also talked about the importance of time in building trusting relationships. Correspondingly, they expressed contentment in being trusted upon by various adults such as foster parents and legal guardians. Similarly, common grounds of sharing similar experience with the migration process, sharing places of origin and language were pointed out as other important avenues in relation building. Being able to understand and relate to the situation of other unaccompanied counterparts assisted them in building friendship ties. They also expressed finding it easier to build ties with others coming from the same country and those who spoke the same language.

Experiences of mistrust and suspect were referred to by participants as one of main hindrances in building relations. One of the common experience of mistrust that they talked about was regarding their age at the immigration board as officials suspected them of reporting as minors. Likewise, respondents also talked about the difficulties in building friendship ties with other Swedish youths despite of their efforts. At different occasions of the interviews, the respondents talked about the importance of improving Swedish language but expressed their challenges in practicing the language in the absence of strong ties with native speakers or Swedish friends.

Some of the respondent also talked about experiencing lack of cultural understanding from care workers at residential units. They described the workers as not being considerate about their needs especially in terms of food. They talked about not being satisfied with the food served at the units and expressed a want for food from their homeland. Similarly, respondents also shared their experience of difficulties and dissatisfaction engulfed under rules set by care workers and foster parents.

The social networks of the minors and youth provided support with various dimensions. One of the main function of the social network was helping the minors and youth to extend their social ties. Friends and acquaintance in their networks usually assisted them in introducing them to new people especially from their own diasporic communities or ethnic groups. These extended networks seemed to provide the respondents with various support such as socializing, expanding ties and assistance in relocating family back home. Similarly, the networks of the participant could also be identified as a medium to practice various diasporic activities such as celebrating festivals from the home country, preparing food and playing musical instruments from home country. In the presence of companionship support from other counterparts from home countries, the respondents usually spent their free times engaging in cooking and sharing food from homeland. Similarly, many of the respondents talked about perceiving their social networks at the back drop of a flexible social environment as influencing previous value changes. Respondents talked about being able to freely express their thoughts about religion and culture without being afraid in the presence of supportive ties. Similarly, the network also seemed to be resourceful in various fronts of integration purposes such as helping the respondents to learn about the Swedish system, language and about Swedish etiquettes and lifestyle. Social support received from the networks could also be seen as providing the respondents with avenues of support to deal with stressful situations.

Findings of the study also suggests that in the lack of perception of support from care workers and friends, some of the respondents expressed challenges such as spending time on their own and being engulfed in loneliness.

5.1.1 Recommendations

Reflecting on the excerpts presented by the respondents, it can be inferred that the participants placed great importance in knowing and connecting with people from their own home countries. They expressed satisfaction in meeting other youths from their home countries as well as being fostered by families originating from their own countries. This continuation seemed to offer them with avenues of attaching meaning to a new environment. It might be recommendable that care units take notice of this and fit into care arrangements wherever feasible.

One of the factors that could be identified was that unaccompanied minors often underwent a continued transition from one care units to another. Various factors such as cultural misunderstandings, feeling of discomfort and inability to adjust in various settings were pointed out as causes wherein the respondents had to break off from previous relations both with care units and foster families. Wernesjö (2014) is of the view that frequent mobility like these might present barriers in building sustainable relations. It is the researchers view that the care units and authorities responsible should pay close attention to assessing these factors beforehand so as to ensure and guarantee qualitative and sustainable care rather. This might reduce in resulting of frequent change of care systems. These factors could also be considered when recruiting legal guardian, foster parents or care workers by appointing those who have experience in dealing with the specific needs of this group.

Although it is as important to focus on resettlement for this group of unaccompanied minors and youth, it is also necessary not to turn a blind eye on their past. While involving in care work with this group of children, it is also vital to understand the

cultural background that they come from and to pay attention to specific needs such as their concern for family back home and their food preference.

Despite showing agency, youths expressed undergoing difficulties in building bonds with Swedish youths. In their opinion, this restricted them from practicing Swedish with native speakers and improving the language. In this line, poor knowledge of host country language and finding difficulties to practice language with native speakers could place the minors and youth on a vicious cycle of being isolated at different levels. This could be taken into account and programs assisting youths to come in contact with Swedish youths could be designed by organisations working in the concerned field.

5.2 Conclusion

The findings of this study corresponds with as well as diverges from various previous researchers and theoretical concepts at different positions. It confirms with previous research in the field in the sense that unaccompanied minors usually build friendship ties with other minors and youth from their own home countries. Similarly, it also goes in line with the theory of social support that states that social support functions help people to attach meaning to their daily lives. The minors who perceived having supportive ties with others expressed themselves as being content and happy whereas some others described themselves as facing many challenges and especially that of loneliness in the lack of perceived social support.

Previous research suggests that many refugees including unaccompanied minors go through what is usually termed as *cultural stress* as they are ripped off their previous ties and try come in contact with the new culture of host country. However, the unaccompanied minors and youth interviewed in this study through their diasporic network groups seemed to keep intact various avenues of their culture such as eating food from their home country and celebrating festivals from their home countries. Many preceding studies have addressed unaccompanied minors as usually keeping silent about various matters and this situation as being in a need to be researched more in depth. It is hoped that some of the findings of this study such as the respondents perceptions of keeping silent with the fear of being reported to the immigration board, time taken in building trust and feeling of not wanting to burden others with their stories can attribute as some of the possible reasons why this group of children and youth prefer to stay silent.

Another finding of the study suggests that unaccompanied minors and youths built relationships with different groups of people at different times of their lives. However, one of the factors that could be identified was that the respondents seemed to experience a recurrent change of support systems as they moved from either one transitional care house to another, foster families and care units, often leaving the newly built networks of friends and care workers behind. The findings of the study suggests that relationships with friends were mostly retrieved and continued even after leaving care settings, as minors and youth often showed agency in keeping in touch with old friends. However, relationships with care workers and professionals seemed to end with the transition process.

Similarly, the study was also aimed to foreground the voice of the children and youth by recognizing them as competent thinkers and communicators. The respondents seemed to

be very resilient at some aspects such as dealing radiantly with their past experiences and building new ties in Sweden. However, in other fronts they also seemed to showcase pockets of needed support such as that with learning a new language i.e., Swedish, knowing more about the system of Sweden and building friendship with Swedish youth and continuing relationships with care workers even after transition to new living arrangements. In-depth exploration of the these findings could not be discussed in profundity by this research work. However, it is hoped that future research works can impart from this and add more insight into the topic.

The study was conducted in a limited time frame of five months. However, in the face of more given time ,it would also have been interesting to include the view of care workers and care takers in the study in terms of their care practices. It is perceived that it would have shed more light on the gaps and provide avenues to bridge it. Aspects of professional boundaries and some care workers perceived as lacking cultural sensitivity were also touched upon by this study. However, a deeper study on this matter would be more interesting. Also the question of whether friendship and care worker ties can replace the resources flowed amidst kinship ties is questionable and needs further investigation.

The results of this study have shown that despite the numerous pressures faced, unaccompanied youths in the study showcased patterns of resilient behaviour and survival strategies ranging from more internalised to marginal expressive approaches. It also shows how these group of minors and youth who are commonly viewed through the lens of being vulnerable are but a resilient group possessing agency in comprehending their situations effectively and communicating their experiences. Future research work could further on involving the voices of this group wherever feasible.

Some of the respondents reflections on care arrangements have revealed bottlenecks in existing care and service arrangements. It the researchers humble view that relevant stakeholders take cognizance of these; and further explore possibilities of enhancing a system of care sensitive to the specialised needs and realities of this targeted group of minors and youth. It is hoped that the collected data will assist in identifying possible avenues or barriers supporting or restricting the growth of social networks for this group of children. Though the study population cannot be representative to all unaccompanied minors and youth, this study could offer insights into some possible patterns of network building that could be better investigated through longitudinal studies in the area.

Appendix 1:Questionnaire

Warming up
Hello and thank you for sparing time to speak to me. My name is **Jayanti** and I am a **Masters' students** at the **University of Gothenburg**. I am studying Social work with families and children and as a part of the program I am doing my research on unaccompanied minors in Sweden. The interview can last approximately between **30- 60 minutes** and the information you share with me will be treated with **confidentiality** and your name will not be included on this interview script. The overall aim of this exercise is to increase my studies understanding of the various ways through which migrating young people build social networks and the importance in social support in their lives.
1. Which country do you come from?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you lived in Sweden?

Who do unaccompanied minors identify as being in their social network? What are they identify as important for building relations in these social networks?

Beginning: Can you tell me about your experience after you arrived to Sweden. Ask rejoinder questions about social support.

Network Mapping exercise on the basis of social support.
Now I would like to ask you a few questions to know about your social relations/ social network
If I ask you how many people who are very close to you here and important to you.
Who would that be?

Emotional support
1) During times you feel happy who do you talk to?
1.1) During times you feel sad who do you talk to?
1.2) Is there any factor that makes it easier for you to approach/contact this person/ these people?
Informational support
2) During times you think you need any important information , who do you talk to?
2.1) Is there any factor that makes it easier to depend on this person?
Appraisal
4) In case you need advice on some matters (personal or any other) who do you approach?
4.1) Is there any factor that makes it easier for you to approach this person/ these people?
Companionship
5) In times you need company, whom do you approach?
5.1) Is there any factor that makes it easier for you to approach this person/ these people?
How would you describe a particular weekday?
And what about a weekend ? Who do you spend time with?

Note to self*
 (Try looking for patterns of network building)
- Where did you meet them?
-Where are they from?
-How old are they?

How do they attach meaning to the role of their social network in their daily lives?
5)How important it is to be in touch with these people in your daily life?
6) How frequently do you stay in contact with them?
7)Are there any times when you feel like you need their support more?
8) Are there any areas where you think you need more support with?

What are the factors that can be identified as enhancing/ impeding the growth of their social network?
9) Are you happy with the size of your social network (the number of people that you mentioned earlier)
10.1) What are the factors that you think helped you build/ maintain/ keep this social network?
10.2) Do you think there are any factors that stopped you from building/ maintaining your social network?

11) Would you like to ask me anything/ Do you have any questions for me?
Thank you so much for participating in this interview!!

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Research Briefing:

My name is Jayanti Karki, a student of Erasmus Mundus Masters in Social Work with families and children. I am doing a research about unaccompanied minors and youth in Sweden. The aim of this study is to increase the knowledge about how a group of unaccompanied youth build their social network and the role of social support received from these networks in their everyday lives. I would thus like to involve you in my study through this interview.

Informed Consent:

I, as the **interviewee's** agree to participate in this study under the following conditions:

- Each interview can last between 30-60 minutes
- The interviews and the information will be used only for the purposes defined by the study.
- Given the consent by the interviewee, the interviews will be recorded to facilitate the process of data collection.
- In case of recording of interviews, all voice recordings will be erased as soon as the data is transcribed.
- In case the interviewee does not give consent on recording the interview, notes will be made to record the data.
- Confidentiality and anonymity of data will be maintained at all times.
- Participation is voluntary .
- The interviewee can end the interview at any time or refuse to answer certain questions or stop to participate in the interviews.

I, as a researcher, fully assure you that confidentiality and anonymity will be kept concerning the responses of the interviewee. Since I am the sole researcher responsible for doing this study, I assure you of my honesty about the academic nature of the research.

If you have any doubts, comments or complaints about this study, feel free to contact me at jayanti182@hotmail.com

Date:
Interviewee :
Interviewer:
Name of Supervisor: Lena Sawyer
Email address of Supervisor: lena.sawyer@socwork.gu.se

Best Regards,
Jayanti Karki

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