Family reunification for unaccompanied minors

An exploratory study of practice based experiences of professionals

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Abstract

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The number of unaccompanied minors arriving to Sweden has increased steadily over the latter years, with an exceptional growth in 2015. Although the minors arrive separated from parents or other family members it is recognized that family bonds often still exist. In keeping with international principles of family unity, Swedish law ensures the right to apply for family reunification. The aim of my study has been to explore and analyse the process of family reunification based on the perspectives of my informants. This has been done to identify both obstacles and potential of current practice, which may ultimately provide a better framework for developing this area of work. The research questions have focused on three main aspects; the influence family reunification may have for the youths' situation, how current practice is experienced and what kind of support professionals provide for the youths. The theoretical framework of my study focuses on different family patterns, social capital and relational social work. The empirical data was collected through a total of 10 semi structured interviews, including 8 professionals and 2 youths. Thematic analysis was used for the interpretation of the collected data.

The findings of my study indicates that family reunification leads to an increased responsibility on the youths. In addition, the amount of individualized support for the youth is reduced. This suggests that family reunification involves a transition of care responsibility that may not take into account the specific situation the family is in. Their position as newly arrived immigrants involves adapting to a different society system. While existing literature emphasizes the importance of stable transitions when leaving public care, this demonstrates an obstacle for current practice. Another finding was that professionals found it difficult to prepare the youths for upcoming challenges due to their strong focus and desire of getting their family to Sweden. This may further challenge the professionals' ability of ensuring a stable transition and positive reunification process. While the professionals reflected upon their own practice, I could identify certain elements that was expressed repeatedly by all informants. This led me to distinguish three typical characteristics of their roles; insufficient role, restrictive role and exceeding role. The first mainly illustrated how the professionals had to relate to external factors they had little influence on. The second characteristic pointed out how they themselves restricted their involvement as a way to maintain the focus of their assigned responsibility. The last role characteristic showed how the professionals at times exceeded their 'professional' responsibility in order to provide sufficient support for the youths. The latter appeared to be dependent on the quality of relationship they had established with the youth. From these role characteristics, I could further distinguish two kinds of support provided: professionally motivated and personally motivated. The former points to the potential that exists within a professional role, while the latter illustrates the emotional aspect of human related practice. The experiences shared by the two youths illustrated how both kinds of support are valuable and necessary in their own context.

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1. Introduction

The number of unaccompanied minors arriving to EU countries have been steadily increasing over the last years, with an exceptional growth in 2015 (Eurostat, 2016). Sweden has been recognized as one of the most liberal countries in terms of immigration policy in Europe (National Statistic Bureau, 2013). Considering the number of arrivals in 2015, this becomes particularly visible: Sweden received 35 000 of a total 90 000 applications from unaccompanied minors in Europe (Europaportalen, 2016). Notably, this is in addition to the number of typical immigrants arriving the country. Although the minors arrive alone many of them still have contact with family members in their country of origin. This necessitates a responsibility for authorities to promote reunification between a minor and his or her family, consistent with international regulations and principles (UNCRC, art. 22; UNHCR, 2001).

Accordingly, Swedish law on immigration, the Aliens Act (1994), states that unaccompanied minors who are granted asylum are entitled to apply for family reunification (5th chapter §3). Therefore, one may expect this to remain a common aspect of practice for those actors involved in the work with this population. This moreover entails a responsibility for the field to facilitate stable transitions for minors undergoing reunification. It is thus relevant to explore how current practice is responding to this responsibility. What obstacles exist in the work of facilitating a positive reunification process? How can involved actors contribute to ensure stable transitions for minors who are reunited with their family? These are relevant questions that require further attention in the field of research.

During previous semester I had an internship at a social service agency in the Gothenburg region. This was at the same time as the refugee situation in Europe was at its most intense, and the professionals at this agency described a situation unlike anything they had experienced. In particular, the agency had to adapt to an increasing amount of unaccompanied minors arriving each week. The professionals expressed this as challenging, however, their main concern related to how they would be able to address the consequences of this situation in the future.

One of the main aspects they discussed focused on the prospect of family reunification for these minors. They explained how they already found this to be a difficult part of their practice, specifically in regards to the impact it had for the youths. The professionals explained how they often identified a negative development for the youths after their family arrived, for example in relation to school performance. They also mentioned cultural conflicts between the minors and their family as a common obstacle while being reunited. A general concern among the professionals was how they could ensure stable transitions for the youths. As the following literature review will show, there has been limited focus on the prospect of family reunification for unaccompanied minors in Swedish context. Considering the current situation, however, it is necessary to enhance this area of knowledge.

The aspects above have ultimately been the leading motivation behind the choice of focus for my study. An essential part of developing practice is to identify both its challenges and its potential. This has also influenced the layout of my research and triggered an interest in exploring these aspects within current practice related to family reunification.

In this chapter, I will continue by illustrating the experiences Sweden has had of receiving unaccompanied minors, as well as putting the current situation into a historical context. I will then highlight some of the central media and political debates, specifically those with clear links to the topic of family reunification. Following this, a brief insight into main agencies involved in the Swedish reception system will be provided. Lastly, I will present the objectives and research question of my study.

1.1 Background – unaccompanied minors in Sweden

When the media portrays the current situation as the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War, one can hardly criticize anyone of being concerned about its implications. Several voices have raised concerns about the consequences it may have for Swedish society. This has particularly been related to the amount of unaccompanied minors arriving in Sweden. Some of these debates will be further elaborated in the next section of this chapter. As a start, this section will aim to put the current situation into an historical context. Although the amount of arrivals has increased over latter years, child migrants is not a new phenomenon. In fact, Marie Hessle (2009), a Swedish clinical psychologist with extensive experience with asylum-seeking children, points out how children migrating alone have long been a part of the various refugee movements in Europe. In her doctoral thesis, Hessle (2009) illustrates a broad overview of unaccompanied minors in Europe throughout the 1900s. In particular, she describes some of the major periods in which Sweden has received unaccompanied minors. Some of these periods are briefly introduced below.

During the Second World War Sweden received what has been called 'the world largest movement of children' (ibid.). About 70 000 Finnish children were transferred to Sweden during this period. Although most of these children were returned to Finland after the war, many of them were subjects of disrupted processes due to Swedish foster parents reluctance to returning them. Further, Hessle (2009) describes how many Hungarian refugees arrived to Sweden after the country´s uprising against the Soviet regime. It is expected that an essential amount of these were youths between 16 and 18. Hessle (2009) illustrates a couple of hundred Hungarian high school students who were allowed to complete their education in Gothenburg. These youths were placed with private families, although nothing is described concerning reunification with birth family.

During the period after 1958 no record has been kept of unaccompanied minors arriving to Sweden. Still, Hessle (2009) argues that one must assume that many children have migrated alone due to the various waves of refugees arriving during this period. War and political instability in different parts of the world maintained the flow of immigration, in particular throughout the 1970s. It was first in 1988 that Swedish government identified several unaccompanied children among those applying for asylum. However, there are no reliable statistics available until 1996. In the following years the number of unaccompanied minors coming to Sweden has varied, although with a clear increase in latter years. From 2003 it has been a steady increase of arrivals, consistently with a majority being boys. The most common reasons for migrating relates to fear, instability and terror in home country (ibid.). The steady increase may partly be explained by the instability in the Middle East. A vast majority of minors arrive from Afghanistan, Iraq and most recently Syria. Additionally, many of the minors escape from military regimes, such as the case in Somalia and Eritrea. One reason for

the amount of young boys arriving is that they are at higher risk of being recruited to armed forces.

Given this brief insight it seems apparent that Sweden has had a prominent role in the reception of unaccompanied minors in various times through recent history. Such an experience may prove to be essential while facing the current situation. What makes the current situation different, however, is that it does not seem to limit itself to a transitory period which has characterized earlier periods. As pointed out, the number of arrivals has increased steadily since 2003, with a total of over 60 000 so far (Swedish Migration Agency Statistics, n. d.). No other records can show a similar increase of child migration over the same period of time.

Another factor regarding the differences is that organized criminal networks for smuggling have developed accordingly to the demands of migration. The European law enforcement agency states how "research indicates [that] 90 % of migrants arriving in Europe have their journey facilitated by a criminal organisation" (Europol, 2016). In addition, the presence of technology and internet provides access to resources that facilitates migration on a different scale compared to earlier periods. More complex smuggling networks increase the risk of migrating itself, as well as it is reducing the authorities' ability to control and safeguard those entering the country (Europol, 2016). This risk must be considered to be even greater for children migrating alone. One can therefore argue that it is a quite different situation Sweden is facing today. Although earlier experiences exist, it may not be comparable to the complexity of the present situation.

Several scholars have focused on questions related to migration over the course of time. The focus on unaccompanied minors has mostly increased as a research area in recent years. As noted, a large amount of recent arrivals come from embattled countries and many have lost contact with family members. It is still recognized that family bonds in many cases do exist, although to varied degrees. Family reunification is therefore a topic which must be considered when reflecting upon the current situation. The following section will focus on some of the existing debates concerning unaccompanied minors, as well as their relevance for family reunification.

1.2 What are the main debates?

The debates regarding immigration have a strong position in Swedish politics and media. Although reports have suggested that immigration overall contributes in a positive manner (Commission on the Future of Sweden, 2013), certain issues have been frequently debated by scholars and professionals. Most of the debates relate to immigration in general, while some have a clear linkage to the topic of family reunification. It is important to stress that this study is not meant as any response to the following debates nor does it take any political position. It still seems relevant to include a brief overview of what has been shaping the public understanding of family reunification.

The increased burden on social services has become particularly visible during the previous years. As many of the minors arrive without any adult network they are consequently dependent on formal support. Concerns have been raised regarding how the pressured situation will influence the quality of the support provided for them. It has been questioned whether formal networks, such as social services or staff at residential homes, may

replace the significant role of a family network. Many of the minors experience an individual freedom they have never had before, leaving them vulnerable to the network they themselves develop (SVT, January 2016). Moreover, many of them are exposed to crime and drug related problems through the networks they develop (ibid.).

Formal networks may not provide the same social control as normally ensured by families, which might become even more visible if the support system is pressured. While the prognoses of expected arrivals are uncertain (Swedish Migration Agency, February 2016), it is notable how municipalities already experience problems in handling the current situation. More than half of the municipalities have reported themselves to the Health and Social Care Inspectorate or considered to do so, for not being able to take care of the minors (SVT, January 2016). It may therefore seem like the quality of care is influenced by the heavy burden left on those providing this care. If the support system is not able to meet the requirements of caring for these minors it suggests that alternative responses might be needed. Whether this involves a stricter immigration policy or establishing a more stable support system are questions left to further discussion. Regardless, it demonstrates the significant value of family belonging.

Several politicians and professionals have raised concern about the gender imbalance among unaccompanied minors, where about 90 % are boys (Migrationsinfo, April 2016). Valerie M. Hudson (2016) is an American researcher who has received a great deal of attention regarding her analysis of the gender imbalance caused by immigration. In particular, she characterizes Sweden as a country where this challenge is apparent. According to a recent article published by Göteborgs Posten (January, 2016), the gender ratio among 15-19 year olds went from 105 to 106.8 males per 100 females. Due to the large amount of arrivals in 2015, with 11 males for each female, this imbalance will most likely continue to increase (ibid.).

In an article, Hudson argues that "young adult sex ratios are arguably the most crucial of all for social stability" (Politico, January 2016). Professor in global health, Hans Rosling, has estimated the same numbers as referred to by Hudson. He also warns about the consequences the current immigration flow may have for the gender balance in Sweden (Expressen, November 2015). He argues that it is necessary to implement drastic changes in asylum policy, while suggesting it should be easier for families to apply asylum together(ibid.). This would be relevant to the prospect of family reunification.

While it is generally accepted that gender imbalance is negative for any society, it remains a contentious debate how the current situation should be addressed. Following Hudson's (2016) rhetoric, actions have to focus on avoiding a male dominant culture. She claims this will lead to a regression of the developed position of women in Europe (ibid.). However, as professor in demography Gunnar Andersson explains, gender imbalance caused by migration normally evens out due to family related migration on a later stage (Expressen, January 2016). This is underpinned by Moa Bursell, researcher in future studies, demonstrating that there are more women than men who receive residency based on family reunification (ibid.).

One of the arguments against family reunification is that it encourages families to force their children to migrate alone, making it easier for them to follow on a later stage (Eide, 2005). The term "anchor children" has been used to describe such practice and many have argued that one must address this by restricting family reunification (ibid.). However, figures

from earlier years have indicated that this practice is not a frequent issue (SVT, 2012). Similarly, Ketil Eide (2005) refers to a previous research where he found that few of arrivals of unaccompanied minors were followed by applications for family reunification. The reasons for and against applying were more nuanced than what the term 'anchor children' suggests, and it has thus been rejected as a valid explanation for child migration (ibid.). It has still been identified as a general explanation for illegal child migration by authorities (Engebrigtsen, 2002). If this is used as a general justification for restricting family reunification it will challenge international guidelines for the best interest of children. It is specified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, that authorities should work to reunite children with their parents. If this is limited through policies based on inaccurate knowledge it can hardly be seen as meeting such demands.

1.3 Reception of unaccompanied minors in Sweden

The following section will provide a brief insight into the main agencies involved in receiving unaccompanied minors. According to the report, *A shared responsibility for unaccompanied children and adolescents*, published by the The Swedish Migration Agency (2015), the Aliens Act (1994) provides the following definition of an unaccompanied child:

> An unaccompanied child is a person who is under the age of 18 and who arrives to Sweden separated from his or her parents or from other adult persons which may be considered to have entered the position of the parents', or who after arrival is without such representative [author's translation] (§1 fifth paragraph).

The same report further provides an extensive overview of the responsibility of public authorities in regards to the reception of unaccompanied minors in Sweden. The following information is a synopsis of the reception system which is most relevant for the context of my study.

The Swedish Migration Agency is responsible for the formal procedures of receiving unaccompanied minors, including the asylum process, search for parents, and assigning further responsibility onto the municipalities. While the minor is seeking for asylum, the Migration Agency has a responsibility of searching for family members of the minor.

The municipality has the main responsibility for an unaccompanied minor's stay. Social Services is the main agency within the municipality who are responsible for assessing needs and make decisions regarding appropriate housing. The staff are normally required to have a relevant education, such as social work. Their practice is regulated by the Social Services Act, which contains rules for how care and treatment should be provided. If the minor is granted residence permit, the Social Service committee takes over the search for family members.

The placement of a minor is commonly residential home, family home or emergency home. The staff at residential homes, as well as family and emergency homes, provides appropriate care during the minor's stay and cooperates with Social Services regarding the minor's situation. In the case of family reunification, the care responsibility typically ends within 30 days. It is normally few requirements of formal education for those providing this care, although staff members at for example residential homes often have a social work education.

Upon arrival, the municipality shall appoint a Trustee (Swedish: God man) for the minor. This person is assigned to ensure that the minor's legal, personal and economic interests are followed. A Trustee does not work on behalf of the municipality, but serves as a representative for the minor. The mandate does not require a formal education, although courses are provided. The mission of a Trustee ends when the minor reaches the age of 18, if his or her family arrive to Sweden or if a custodian is appointed (Swedish: särskild förordnad vårdnadshavare). The custodian is appointed through an application to the district court when the minor receives a residence permit or reaches the age of 18. At times, the Trustee is assigned this mission.

The focus of my study will be on the family reunification process within this system. A further discussion of the actors involved in this study will follow in the methodology chapter. The informants will also be introduced at the beginning of my chapter regarding findings.

1.4 Objective of study and research questions

The objective of this study is to explore how relevant actors involved in the process of family reunification experience current practice. For the convenience of my paper, I will in the following refer to all the professional actors included in my research as 'professionals'. As described above, this does not necessarily reflect the educational background of each person.

The objective of my study aims to identify both the challenges and the potential of current practice, as well as to enable a better framework for developing this area of work. An essential part of my study is thus to conduct interviews with professionals who have been involved in this area of work. Another important element of the study is the experiences shared by two youths who have recently been reunified with their family. The aim of including their perspectives is to provide a more holistic insight of how family reunification may influence the situation of unaccompanied minors, and what role professionals may have for the process. The study specifically focuses on three main questions:

1. What do professionals identify as main influences of family reunification in regards to the situation of unaccompanied minors?
2. How is current practice experienced by professionals?
3. What kind of support do professionals provide for the minors?

A further description of the research process will follow in the methodology chapter later in this paper.

2. Literature review

In this chapter, I aim to highlight some of the existing knowledge related to the topic of unaccompanied minors and family reunification. The chapter will start by focusing on some main discussions among Scandinavian scholars related to unaccompanied minors. Notably, there has been a limited amount of research focusing on family reunification in Swedish context. I will therefore introduce some international research illustrating the impact of separation and reunification. This provides an insight into the potential family reunification may have for those minors undergoing the process.

I will moreover present research related to the process of leaving public care. This is done to illustrate the parallel process unaccompanied minors often are undergoing while being reunited with their family. Following this, I will also go into some research focusing on relevant aspects for ensuring stable transitions out of care. Although the context of these researches may differ, it is considered to have comparable links to this study. Ultimately, the chapter will demonstrate what the contribution of this study is and where it is positioned in the existing body of knowledge.

2.1 The perception of childhood

The topic of unaccompanied minors has increased as a focus area among Scandinavian researchers in latter years. An explanation for this might be the liberal position Scandinavian countries have had in receiving this population. Although the scope of research varies it is notable how family reunification has been lacking as a focus. More emphasis has been put on the vulnerability of unaccompanied minors as a population of separated children. Additionally, a lot of the research focuses on the critical period of arriving and settling into a new country. Less focus has therefore been granted to the potential of reunification with birth family.

Although there might exist a lack of specific focus on reunification, there are several contributions with close linkage to the topic. A frequent subject of discussion concerns the impact of age, as this is so decisive for the support provided. How age is understood will seemingly determine how needs are addressed. This has led many researchers to discuss what factors that define the perception of childhood. The following section will briefly highlight some of these discussions, while considering how significant these factors will be for those minors applying for family reunification.

Stretmo (2014), a Swedish social scientist, has conducted research on how unaccompanied minors are constructed and governed as a specific group in Norway and Sweden. An essential part of her study is understanding the impact of conceptualizing this group. As a part of her analysis, Stretmo (2014) analyses both media debates and official policies. For example, she discusses how unaccompanied minors are entitled to a specific reception and softer measures based on the Western notion of childhood. As she further points out, there is no clear

distinction of what constitutes a child from an adult besides chronological age. Consequently, less emphasis is put on level of maturity or individual needs. Stretmo (2014) argues how the notion of chronological age becomes so decisive for the reception of unaccompanied minors that it minimizes the focus on maturity. In contrast, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2010) has specified that age assessment "should take into account the psychological maturity of the individual in addition to physical and cultural factors" (p. 12). In her study, Stretmo (2014) illustrates some controversy of Scandinavian policies related to unaccompanied minors. Notably, she does not seem to pay much attention to the potential of family reunification. Her research focuses on unaccompanied minors as a group of continuously separated children and thus reunification is less emphasized.

Still, following Stretmo's (2014) analysis, the concept of age will be decisive for the prospect of family reunification. While it is considered in the best interest of a child to live with his or her parents, the same emphasis does not exist for those above legal age. How age is understood will therefore be of such decisive nature that it requires deliberation. This has been an area of focus among several researchers in Scandinavia. Ketil Eide (2012) emphasizes the significant impact age assessment has for unaccompanied minors. He argues that it is important to differentiate between assessing chronological age and having a developmental perspective of age assessment. Whereas the first will primarily have juridical relevance, the latter will be essential for providing appropriate care. The juridical perspective of age will at large decide what entitlements exist, thus including questions related to family reunification.

The impact reunification may have for a minors' well-being is not granted the same attention, which underlines the relevance of an additional perspective to the one Eide points out. As her research focus is on minorities and migration, Ada Engebrigtsen (in Eide, 2012) compliments this discussion by addressing the framework of Western understanding of childhood. She asks whether the existing premises are hindering the understanding of unaccompanied minors' situation and thusly not providing a realistic assessment of what is the best interest of the child (ibid.).

It is apparent how chronological age or being without parents influences the understanding of minors' needs. Being without parents is not compatible with the notion of a positive childhood development in Western context (Engebrigtsen, in Eide 2012). This may explain why biological bonds are so strongly emphasized in international regulations. Being under legal age further provides minors with strong protection and care measures. In contrast, whenever the minor reaches legal age their entitlements are diminished. This illustrates an instability in the support provided for unaccompanied minors, as many of them are close to legal age. Also, it helps explain why false identities occur among this group (Eide, 2005). This, consequently, reinforces the need for age assessments.

2.2 Family Reunification Experiences

As Scandinavian research has had a fairly limited focus on family reunification it does not provide much awareness of the impact this may have. Therefore, one may need to look into what knowledge international research can provide. Although it might be different contexts it is arguably of interest to gain insight into existing experiences of family reunification.

An essential contribution to this research is the article "Long Journey Home: Family Reunification Experiences of the Disappeared Children of El Salvador", published in 2015 by the Human Rights Quarterly. The article puts focus on the forced separation of children from their birth family, during the civil war in El Salvador between 1980 to 1992. Many of these children were adopted by families in other countries, who were unaware of the forced separations. The Association of the Search of Disappeared Children has helped many families to re-establish contact. Throughout the study interviews were conducted with 26 young adults who experienced both separation and reunification with their birth families.

Barnert, Stover, Ryan & Chung (2015) conceptualize six phases representing the process of separation and reunification: pre-disappearance, disappearance, separation, searching, reunion, and reunification. All of these phases illustrate different contexts of the El Salvadorian youths' development. An important finding showed that all the youths struggled to develop their identity. The article points out how this, as well as lacking their families, often left them feeling socially isolated (ibid.). Moreover, it states how "the psychological and social processes that characterized family separation often persisted well into reunification" (ibid., p 502). Additionally, the article provides an insight into some dilemmas they experienced during the process of family reunification. The results showed that many youths experienced a conflict about the potential reunion with their biological family, specially those who had been raised by adoptive families described "grappling with feelings of disloyalty" (ibid., p. 503).

The article further illustrates how there often existed a class and cultural gap when family reunification occurred. Many of the youth had received more schooling than their biological family. This may explain why many of them also expressed the process of family reunion as disorienting. A common description suggested that many "struggled to figure out how they would fit into their families" (ibid., p. 504). Another interesting finding showed that many of the youths struggled with their identity and feeling connected to their families and peers even after family reunification. The article emphasizes the notion of "ambiguous reunification" as important to understand the youths' experiences with reunification. This is explained as "the uncertainty and ambiguity in roles, titles, norms, and expectations in the newly forming relationships" (ibid., p. 508).

Ultimately, the findings suggest that despite such difficulties, it can be overcome. The authors argue how family relationships can be rebuilt on new terms, addressing the ambiguity that many face during this process. The article concludes that the overall positive experiences with reunification argue for promoting family reunification whenever possible. Moreover, the articles suggest that long-term support is essential for children and young people who are undergoing reunification. In particular, reintegration of identity and family concepts will be beneficial for the health and well-being of these individuals (ibid.). The results of this study relate to quite unique circumstances. Still, the authors argue that it "may extend to children separated from their families as a result of diverse situations" (ibid., p. 509). As such, the results may still be applicable although the context of unaccompanied minors in Sweden might differ.

2.3 Leaving public care

As the results above suggest, being reunited with birth family has significant potential. This is evidently valuable while working with those undergoing the process. However, being reunited with birth family does not necessarily guarantee a positive outcome. The minor will often have been separated from the family for quite some time before they arrive. This may lead to a certain gap between the two when reunification happens. The minor is likely to have adapted to the local context and more or less integrated into society. Additionally, one must expect that both parties have changed and developed since they last lived together. It may therefore be naïve to expect that a reunification would happen without any obstacles. The question is then to what extent one may prepare for such challenges and how they can be addressed. These questions will be the focus of the following discussions.

As pointed out, there is fairly limited research concerning family reunification for unaccompanied minors. It is therefore difficult to provide any clear picture of the typical challenges regarding this process. However, if one looks beyond this population, it is possible to find relevant experiences. Ingrid Höjer and Yvonne Sjöblom (2014) conducted research of 65 young people leaving care in Sweden. Although the group they focused on were not reunited with their family, they do present results relating to the experiences of life after being in public care. The emphasis of the research is on the transition from public care to individual responsibility.

In the context of family reunification, one must expect that unaccompanied minors are involved in the settlement process of their family. As the minors are likely to have a stronger understanding about Swedish society one may further assume that an increased responsibility will follow due to this knowledge. In their study, Höjer & Sjöblom (2014) focused on two major factors: the care leaving process and access to support. For example, they found that administrative rules were frequently mentioned as the reason for leaving care. Such rules are regulated by legislative frameworks, and several of the youths expressed a desire to stay longer in the care facility if it had been possible. Moreover, the study showed that formal networks were an important factor for the youth when needing practical support, such as dealing with enquiries from authorities etc. The participants of the study expressed that it was challenging to know how to deal with all sorts of practical tasks that they normally had received help with. While youths who leave home normally can rely on continued support from family networks, the same access may not exist when these resources are absent or limited.

Höjer & Sjöblom (2014) conclude that "care leavers need a gradual and flexible transition process based on their needs and their level of maturity" (p. 84). While the research notably focuses on transition to adulthood rather than reunification with family, one may expect that similar needs of continued support exist also for the latter group. The transition out of public care will in both contexts involve a reduction of public involvement and thus increase individual responsibility.

In an American federal report, *Family Reunification: What the Evidence Shows*, published by the Child Welfare Information Gateway (2011), certain indicators were found as being particularly important for a positive outcome of family reunification. The context of this report was somewhat different as it related mostly to children being placed in foster care. However, the report states that "family reunification… refers to the process of returning

children in temporary out-of-home care to their families of origin" (p. 2). One could thus expect that the results of this study also may apply to the context of unaccompanied minors undergoing reunification. Family engagement was mentioned as an important indicator for a positive reunification, such as involving birth families in planning and decision-making. While it may in the context of family reunification be challenging to involve birth family before their arrival, it suggests an essential purpose of establishing early contact. It moreover argues for the importance of involving the family during the transition process after arrival.

Another indicator related to the assessment and case planning prior to family reunification. The report (2011) points out how "assessing the strengths and needs of children and families, involvement of parents and children in case planning, building on family strengths and addressing specific needs" (p. 4) are essential activities. This suggests valuable priorities when professionals are facilitating family reunification. In particular, addressing specific needs would include any lack of language skills or knowledge about society. Lastly, "targeted services that meet the individualized needs of children and families" (ibid., p. 5) are described as essential for a positive reunification. Specifically, post-reunification services are mentioned as key features and continued involvement is emphasized. This may ensure that any practical challenges are addressed by the services provided rather than solely relying on the family to deal with it themselves. It may thus suggest that a family reunification process could benefit from a gradual transition.

A third example of research was conducted in similar fields was done by Vinnerljung, Hjern & Öman (2004). Their study focuses on children who were replaced in public care after being reunited with their family. Through examining national registers, they looked at what parental factors influenced the risk of replacement in public care. In their article, they present various factors which were found to increase or decrease the risk of being replaced back into public care. The study focused on all children who were reunited with their family after being in public care for at least 15 days between 1990-1996. Although the context is different the article still points to relevant indicators for positive family reunification. As the authors points out, many within developmental psychology argue that it is the amount of risk factors that determines unwanted outcomes (Rutter & Quinton, 1984; Sameroff et al, 1987; Quinton & Rutter, 1988; Rutter, 1989, 1990; Stattin & Magnusson, 1996), However, it is essential to understand what risk factors exist in order to avoid an accumulation of them.

An interesting finding suggests that socioeconomic variables, such as poverty, have a limited explanatory value for negative reunifications. The authors argue that the Swedish welfare system is the reason for this, and that factors on individual or family levels have a much stronger effect. For example, the interaction between parents and authorities are likely to be of greater influence on the outcome. This is in line with the previous mentioned research, emphasizing involvement and cooperation with parents. Moreover, it provides constructive knowledge of how to facilitate family reunification rather than fixed determents. The authors further demonstrate how an in-depth understanding about the risks for negative reunifications must be sought based on more interaction related knowledge (ibid.). The transition from public to family care is evidently a process which demands attention. While a positive outcome relies on several elements, it appears as if the contribution of professionals is a profound factor in this.

2.4 Stable transitions out of care

Drawing both on the perspectives of previous literature and the following results of this study suggests that leaving public care is in many ways a parallel process for those minors undergoing family reunification. The reunification process must also be seen in connection to the period while being under public care. Mike Stein (2012) is a professor in social policy with 30 years of experiences in the research field of young people leaving care. He argues that care leavers belonging to ethnic minorities are particularly in need of continued support during the transition from public care. This has been underpinned by several researchers, in particular due to the specific life situation differentiating them from other care leavers (Dixon et al., 2008; Ward, 2001; Eide & Lidén, 2012; Söderqvist et al., 2014).

Focusing on preparation and transition planning for unaccompanied minors, Jim Wade (2011) has conducted an extensive review of existing research evidence from the UK. He found that preparation should be based on sound assessments, gradual planning during the time in care as well as situated within the context of a stable placement. It was moreover identified that stable placements were associated with more engagement in education as well as developing stronger networks of social support (Wade et al., 2005). The latter suggests that positive conditions for life after care may be established during the placement period. Although formal support ends after the time in care, it is possible to enhance resources that the youth can benefit from on a long term basis.

A Swedish study (Söderqvist et al., 2015) identified how staff members at residential care units experienced difficulties in finding a balance between providing support and stability, as well as preparing the youths for a life without access to this support. The study further illustrates that close relations with the youths were perceived as challenging because it could lead to strong attachments. Some of the staff members interviewed in the study expressed how a more collective focus of their involvement with the youths could avoid this issue. The author mention that keeping "a distance from the youths has the purpose of protecting the youths and facilitating their transition out of care" (ibid., p. 251). However, different staff members disagreed in regards to the aspect of emotional involvement. This indicates that the emotional aspect of practice is a disputed matter among practitioners.

Another element of emotional involvement is that it may demonstrate a commitment that is necessary in order to establish trusting relationships with the youths. While listening to social workers talk about their work with unaccompanied minors, Ravi Kohli (2005) found that "effective practice appeared to contain at its core an emotional commitment by the social workers towards the young people, based on a complex and robust relationship" (p. 4). The professionals he talked to explained how developing trusting relationships with the youths was difficult and a time consuming process. It was still perceived as an important part of their practice as it influenced their further work with the youths.

Research on unaccompanied youths leaving care in Sweden has illustrated how feelings of isolation and loneliness may occur during the time after care (Söderqvist, 2013; Rogers, 2011). Söderqvist et al. (2015) argue that one solution to this may be to allow continuing contact with former carers. It is then relevant to acknowledge how the context for those youths being reunited with their family differs from other care leavers, for example in terms of the access to emotional support. The need for continued contact with former support networks might not be necessary if the time after care ensures stability and a sense of home.

A case study on young asylum seekers' conception of 'home' found that safety, security and stability were key aspects in establishing a sense of home (Sirriyeh, 2008). The same study also identified that the existence of home was associated with how 'normal' their life felt (ibid.). This indicates that the context for those being reunited with their family have the potential of ensuring a sense of home, assuming that the reunification involves the criteria above.

2.5 Position of this study

As illustrated above, a limited amount of research has focused on the actual work with family reunification in Swedish context. Nevertheless, there are important contributions regarding the possible implications of both separation and reunification. There has also been research from related fields that illustrate relevant knowledge for the work of ensuring stable transitions and positive reunification processes for unaccompanied minors. What seems to be coherent in the research is the overall positive outcomes family reunification may provide. There are political debates which highlights important challenges and these should not be overlooked. Still, the debates have not questioned whether family reunification itself is negative. The debates are rather concerned with the question as to where this should be dealt with.

It is not the aim of my study to discuss where, why and to what extent family reunification should happen. The following paper will base itself on the prospect that this will remain a frequent task for the social work field. As such, the findings of this study will be positioned in a relevant but less emphasized area of research. First of all, this will be of value for those professionals involved in the work with unaccompanied minors and families undergoing reunification. It will for one thing provide them with an arena for advocating how they experience current practice. It will moreover facilitate a more practical understanding of how future practice may be developed. The latter is also of relevance for those involved in administration, as the study will provide an insight of areas in need of improvement. Furthermore, it will hopefully be a useful tool for politicians and authorities developing the guidelines for practice. Most significant is the value it may have for those families undergoing reunification. Providing a better framework for developing this practice is crucial for how these families are addressed. Arguably, this will be of important value for the integration into Swedish society.

3. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I will present the theoretical framework of my study. The following theories and concepts will, together with the previous literature review, form the base for my later analysis of data. The theories I have chosen to focus on may have varied applicability to my later results. For example, in the first section of this chapter I will discuss different family models and how changing patterns of family life may appear as a part of increased immigration. This is relevant for the understanding of cultural aspects that might be involved in family reunification processes. It may still be less applicable for other parts of my results. In the second section of this chapter, I will focus on the concept of social capital and the role of social networks. I consider this to be relevant for the understanding of how societal resources and social position may influence family reunifications. Lastly, I will discuss the relational aspect of social work and its relevance for professional involvement.

3.1 Family models and changing patterns

Swedish society is characterized by a variety of cultures and diversity. This means that patterns of family life will vary equally, which may lead to an ambiguity in the understanding of family life. Many of those arriving to Sweden come from cultures which are distinctly different from what constitutes Western ideals of individualism. For social workers it may impose challenges when engaging with families who are not meeting such ideals. Their assessment criteria are closely linked to individual needs (Hepworth et al., 2010). As such, one may find social workers justifying individual development as the core reason for interventions or measures. Arguably, such a stance is in keeping with basic understandings of human development. For example, the international definition of social work states that:

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities

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are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (IFSW, 2014)

Although emphasizing social cohesion and respect for diversities, there are distinct elements of individualism in this definition. The emphasis on empowerment and liberation suggests that autonomy and self determination are universal goals. This is moreover underpinned through the principles of human rights, with its clear links to Western values of individualism. It is relevant to emphasize that it is not the aim of this section to oppose the idea of autonomy or self determination. The question is rather if the standards of individualism are so comprehensive they surpass all other ideal, or if there is a common ground in which different perspectives can derive from. In the following section, these questions will be further elaborated upon based on different models of family life. What characterizes different ways of family life? How do shifting family patterns adapt into new contexts and why is it necessary for social workers to understand such changes?

Cigdem Kagiticibasi, a professor of psychology, has conducted an extensive amount of research on human and family development. Her focus is based on cross cultural and contextual understanding of family patterns. Kagiticibasi (2004) describes typical family interaction patterns, differentiated into three models: the model of total interdependence, the model of total independence, and a synthesis of the two; the model of emotional interdependence. She further illustrates how the material and emotional conditions of family life is what differentiates the models from each other. In families of total interdependence, individuals are contributing throughout an entire lifespan. Whereas the material contribution is important for a family's livelihood, the emotional support serves as a kind of care insurance. Thus, independence may "be seen as a threat to the family livelihood because independent offspring may look after his/her own self-interest rather than that of the family" (ibid., p. 5). This pattern of family life is often seen in rural, traditional societies.

In contrast, family life in Western societies is more often characterized as a model of independence. Here self-reliance and autonomy are much more valued, and "social welfare and affluence render family interdependence unnecessary" (ibid., p. 6). Material and emotional conditions are not decisive for keeping a family together, hence autonomy and self-realization is no longer a threat. Still, Kagiticibasi (2004) argues that an assumption of interdependency shifting toward independency in line with socio economic development carries limited explanatory value. She points out how close interactions often continues, "despite increased urbanization and industrialization in collectivistic cultures" (refers to Kagiticibasi, 1990, 1996a). Therefore, a third model of emotional/psychological interdependence is introduced.

In this third typology material independence is combined with emotional dependence. Such an understanding "helps explain the ethnic variations in family/human patterns currently experienced among immigrant groups in Western societies" (p. 7). This model, according to Kagiticibasi, is more optimal for human development because it addresses two basic human needs: autonomy and intimacy. It further suggests that collectivism and individualism do not necessarily have to exist at the expense of each other. Enhancing autonomy and self-reliance does not weaken family interactions, as the need for intimacy will ensure continued family

bonds.

Such a modified family model would seemingly have greater potential of integration into diverse societies. In fact, Kagiticibasi motivates this model due to "its adaptability in urban living conditions" (p. 6). Whereas total interdependency may not fit into Western contexts, total independence may not address the specific character of a more collective family life. The combination of autonomy and attachment would therefore be more compatible with such contrasting ideals. Kagiticibasi argues how this kind of combination provides a balance between autonomy and control oriented parenting, akin to the authoritative parenting style introduced by Diana Baumrind (1980). This type of parenting has been recognized as a more beneficial approach due to its balanced nature. However, critics have questioned its value among those of more collective descent, claiming that it has less relevance beyond Western societies (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Nadia Sorkhabi (2005) have therefore been analysing the applicability of Baumrind´s parenting styles to collective cultures. She points out how authoritative parents "are more effectively able to coordinate and integrate multiple and (at times) competing goals, which include social requirements or group goals and individual needs or goals, present across cultures" (p. 559).

In diverse societies with shifting and sometimes contrasting family patterns, this kind of merging approach might be a more constructive ideal. Indeed, Kagiticibasi argues that "given its benefits, it may be the future of the family, not only in the Majority World with cultures of relatedness, but also in the West" (p. 8). For social workers it is important to gain knowledge about emerging family patterns. In particular, it would provide a better sense of how to understand and address contextual factors of child rearing. Moreover, it ensures a more genuine practice when approaching families of different backgrounds.

3.2 Social capital

The concept of social capital has had a prominent position in social sciences, and its relevance for understanding individual and family development remains apparent. While the definition of social capital varies (e.g. Coleman 1988; Bourdieu & Wacquent 1992; Putnam 1993) it commonly addresses the availability of societal resources for individuals. Burt (2001) refers to the concept as a metaphor about advantage. He argues that there is a consensus on social capital "in which social structure is a kind of capital that can create for certain individuals or groups a competitive advantage in pursuing their ends" (ibid., p. 32). That is to say, one must regard individuals partly as a result of their social context. The potential for development cannot be explained purely based on individual characteristics as these characteristics are dependent on the social structure in which they are allowed to evolve (ibid.). More generally, it is the social structures between individuals and the social groups they belong to which are the sources of social capital (Hagan, MacMillan & Wheaton 1996).

This illustrates an important role of social networks in accessing social support. Ryan et al. (2008) points out how "social capital and networks are frequently seen as synonymous" (p. 673). However, the authors argue that one should not employ a general notion about social capital being equivalent with social networks. They rather propose that one should differentiate between the varying types of social support and resources that networks provide. Following Schaefer et al. (in Oakley, 1992), networks may ensure emotional, informational and instrumental support. These different types of support help illustrate what strategies are

motivating the development of social networks. In the following, these strategies will be further discussed based on the concepts of bonding and bridging ties.

The need for emotional support is normally provided by 'close ties', such as relatives and friends. This kind of support involves a good deal of trust and empathy (Ryan et. al. 2008), which is often found among people who are connected emotionally. In contrast, informational support refers more to a kind of society guide that involves knowing the local community. These types of resources often become particularly essential for newly arrived migrants who are settling into a new context. As it does not require the same level of emotional involvement, this may be provided by 'weaker ties' one might find outside the intimate circle. Instrumental support is a kind of practical help that allows individuals to gain access to basic necessities, such as jobs or housing. Again, this requires knowledge about society rather than emotional bonds, and may thus be provided by both weak and close ties. These varied forms of social support argue for a distinction between the motivations of accessing them. As people are positioned differently they are likely to adopt strategies according to their needs.

Such strategies can be explained based on what Putnam (2007) refers to as bonding and bridging. People bond ties with those they are alike and with whom they can share common interests, values and traditions. This may explain why immigrants tend to create close ties to those of similar ethnic background. However, it does not necessarily mean they exclusively surround themselves with people of similar ethnicity. Bridging ties illustrates how people connect with people outside their intimate sphere, as a way to gain access to shared society resources. For migrant networks, such ties are often a vital part of establishing or enhancing their position in society. As the process of bridging ties does not require emotional connection it becomes less complicated while it still ensures access to important resources. These two network strategies do not contradict each other, but are linked through different functions. Ryan et. al. (2008) argue that

> migrants who establish strong, trusting relationships with their co-ethnics and who develop the necessary skills, such as language, may be able to adapt these skills to establish more extensive relationships, weak ties, beyond their own ethnic group (p. 676).

The bonding ties that migrants establish with those of same ethnic background might therefore be an important part in the process of integrating into the larger society. Social capital can be seen as a source for identity belonging, where bonding ties involves finding one's place in society. Reynolds (2011) describes bonding as an aspect of social capital that connects people into a homogenous group and to the trust and reciprocity that exists within it. In contrast, she describes bridging as a way of connecting and creating trust and reciprocity between social groups. While bonding is important to ensure a sense of belonging *in* society, bridging ties can be seen as an important process of ensuring belonging *to* society.

It is therefore essential for newly arrived immigrants to establish such connections to ensure a positive integration process. Too much emphasis on close ties and local cohesion may lead to fragmentation and challenge the overall integration into community (Granovetter, 1973). As mentioned, bridging ties connect people with those outside their intimate circle. This often relate to neighbours, colleagues or other people who appear during daily activities. However, some groups might not be exposed to such people on a regular basis. For example,

newly arrived immigrants are likely to have a limited network of acquaintances during the first period of their stay. Professionals may thus become the bridging ties that connects this group to societal resources. The access to network support and establishing social capital might then be determined by professional involvement. The following section will focus on what role professional's may have in establishing social capital. Moreover, the chapter will discuss the relational aspect of social work and its relevance for the quality of professional involvement.

3.3 Relational social work

As illustrated, social capital will in many ways set the premises of how to access support and societal resources. The role of professionals may thus become relevant in the process of locating or benefiting from existing social capital. Odd Harald Røkenes and Per-Halvard Hanssen (2012) are both clinical psychologists who have focused on the relational aspect of human-related work. They talk about network mapping as a way to reveal what kind of social support is available for individuals. For example, it may illustrate which persons within a network can provide emotional, practical and material support. Network mapping might therefore be a way for professionals to get to know a person and establish a relationship. It allows them to identify what resources and obstacles are present in a person's environment. It may further help professionals to see how their contribution fits into the existing network (ibid.). Essentially, it may determine the extent to which professional involvement is necessary. This will evidently be relevant for those individuals and families with poor social capital, as it might determine how their needs are addressed. The quality of support appears to not only be determined by structural conditions but also on the relational interactions that happen underway.

Irene Levin (2004) has focused on what constitutes social work as a profession and how it is positioned in between society and individuals. She describes how social workers may become a significant other for their clients through establishing a trusting relationship. This requires the social worker to utilize his or her professional skills to create a positive working relation (Shulman, 2008). Røkenes and Hanssen (2012) describe how professional competence consists of two main aspects: technical competence and relational skills [both author's translation]. These are not isolated from each other, but they point towards different aspects of professional involvement. Technical competence describes the instrumental skills and knowledge that professionals make use of while engaging with clients. For example, a social worker will need knowledge about the system if he or she is to teach the client how it works. She can furthermore use her skills to show the client how to access resources within the system, such as filling in a form or writing an application. Willem Blok (2012), a sociologist and senior lecture in social work studies, has focused on the roles of social workers. He underpins the aspect of technical competence by illustrating the specific role professionals tend to have:

> a social worker is *teacher and coach* by helping clients cope more effectively and efficiently in everyday life, and by teaching clients how to use their abilities, and develop their skills to prevent and solve problems and to open new perspectives in their lives. (p. 126)

Essentially, this kind of competence relates to the knowledge and skills that enable professionals to act *with* or *for* another person (ibid.).

Meanwhile, relational skills determine how professionals interact with their clients. Levin (2004) points out how professionals work through the relationship they establish with their clients. Røkenes and Hanssen (2012) explain how professionals with relational skills are able to communicate meaningfully while still maintaining the overall purpose of their interaction. For example, when a professional teaches a client how a system works he or she also has to relate to the client as person. The instrumental knowledge and skills will be of limited value if the professional is unable to interact with the client in a positive way. As such, professional competence involves both the ability to *act* and the ability to *interact*.

It appears that the relational aspect of social work is highly influential, making it relevant to discuss how positive relations can be developed. In particular, Røkenes and Hanssen (2012) points to three main conditions: behaviour, empathy and recognition. The authors point out how the behaviour of professionals can enhance or prevent a good relation with clients. In general, they identify how professionals should be aware of their appearance, such as clothes and attitude, while approaching clients. Moreover, the authors talk about the importance of empathy and how this relate to understanding the subjective experience of another person. This might become especially relevant, and equally challenging, when approaching clients with traumatic experiences.

In her book about professional social work, Judy Kokkin (2005) argues for the necessity of being emotionally involved in order to establish a good relation with clients. Røkenes and Hanssen (2012) emphasize how empathy is a state of emotional closeness as well as distance and reflection. The latter points out how it is impossible to fully put oneself in another person's situation, and that any attempt of this would involve introspection (Røkenes and Hanssen, 2012). The final condition for establishing a positive relation emphasizes how professionals should demonstrate recognition while engaging with clients. This allows clients to feel that they are accepted, confirmed, validated and respected in their contact with professionals (ibid.). Recognition is an overarching concept in relational social work (Schibbye 2002; Aamodt 2005). It is a way for professionals to approach clients in a constructive, meaningful manner which is tolerant and encourage further contact.

Schulman (2003) describes interaction theory as being concerned with how professional skills are the main ingredients in achieving a positive working relationship. It is through the established relationship that social workers approach their clients. This further indicates that professional involvement involves more than just theoretical knowledge or technical skills. It suggests that any interaction will involve personal aspects, which may influence the relationship. The interaction theory illustrates how professional skills influence the working relationship which ultimately determines the final result of the involvement. However, Schulman (2003) emphasizes that such a model is dynamic and mirrored. While the working relationship will be influenced by the skills utilized by professional, the existing relationship will also influence how professionals make use of their skills.

The development of positive relations with clients is thus effected by the ongoing interactions. Schulman (2003) challenges the assumption that social workers always should restrict their involvement. He argues that there is no reason for social workers to choose between their professional self or personal self. In contrast, it is suggested that professional

involvement is at its best when both of these aspects are combined. This indicates a potential for social workers to make use of their personal motivation for engaging with clients. As such, it may embrace not only the taught skills but also the passion and personal experiences of professionals. This might enhance a more genuine approach while engaging with clients, which thus will profit the relational aspect of social work.

4. Methodology

The process of conducting this research has been comprehensive, and has demanded a substantial amount preparation to reach its final product. Most of the work of my thesis has involved non-writing aspects that might not be equally visible for the readers. It is therefore my hope that the following chapter will give an insight into the process of developing this paper. An exploratory research design was deemed as most suitable for my study as the problem area I intended to focus on was not clearly defined. I had a distinct desire to understand how practice related to family reunification is experienced, and for this I found an exploratory approach to be most appropriate.

In the following chapter, I will describe how the methodological approach of my study has been carried out. The chapter will start with a general introduction of qualitative research, including the steps normally involved while conducting this kind of research. I will then discuss how informants were chosen for the study, as well as illustrating the sampling process. The further sections will focus on how I collected and interpreted my data. This includes reflections related to the interview approach, communication during the interviews and the choice of method for analysis. Following this, I will mention some of the possible limitations of my study, before I present and discuss relevant criteria that can be used to assess the validation and reliability of my results. Ultimately, I will reflect upon some ethical considerations related to the research process.

4.1 Qualitative research

Alan Bryman (2012) points out certain aspects often found within qualitative research. He mentions how it is an inductive approach, meaning that theory is generated from research data. At the start of this research project, I anticipated that certain theoretical perspectives

would be emphasized. This was due to previous experiences from the field, as well as existing knowledge about the situation of unaccompanied minors. Some of these theories were correctly found in the collected data while other theoretical perspectives also emerged. This study can be seen as inductive in the sense that theory did arrive from data, but it cannot be seen as purely inductive because I also had certain idea about what theory would be relevant.

On another note, Bryman (2012) mention that qualitative research is an approach to understand a social world through examining how it is interpreted by its participants. The aim of my study corresponds with this description, as I intended to explore professionals' experiences of existing practice. The author describes qualitative interviewing as one of the main methods within this field of research. Silverman's (1993) criticism of the lacking acknowledgement of the variety within research strategies is recognized by Bryman (2012), as he points out how the qualitative interview is a broad term including several different interviewing styles. The specific approach I have used for this study includes a semi structured interviews and this will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Bryman (2012) points to six main steps in qualitative data: general research question, selection of relevant subjects (informants), collection of relevant data, interpretation of data, conceptual and theoretical work and writing up findings/conclusions. While the first and the two latter steps are presented in other chapters, I will in following sections describe the remaining steps.

4.2 Choice of informants

An important part of my research was to establish whom I would include in the study. Bryman (2012) talks about purposive sampling and how its goal "is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research question" (p. 418). I decided relatively early what professionals I wanted to include in my study. The emphasis on my research related to practice based experiences of family reunification and I started by evaluating potential informants. As explained in the beginning of this paper there are quite a few agencies and professionals involved in the process. In order to make the research comprehensible, I chose to limit my focus to the professionals who are commonly a part of the process and who are engaged with the youths on a micro level.

One of the criteria while finding informants was that each of them had a role in the process which was stable. For example, I decided to not include professionals from the the Swedish Migration Agency because their role is more transitory. Similarly, I decided to not interview emergency homes because this is not a long term and stable placement. While choosing between informants representing family homes or residential homes, the latter was chosen due to an expectation that it would be easier to gain access and provide a broader set of experiences.

Although I do not intend to generalize practice experiences, I still found that it would be favourable to include individuals who could represent different areas of practice. Bryman (2012) points out how researchers often evaluate the amount of variety the informants will have in the final sample. This is to ensure that "sample members differ from each other in terms of key characteristics relevant to the research question (p. 418). I did not set as a criterion that the informants had a formal or specific kind of education. This is because some

of those who work closest to unaccompanied minors do not necessarily have relevant education. The focus of my research was also on practice rather than professions.

Lastly, I considered whether or not to set geographical representation as a criterion while selecting informants. As the following section will illustrate I experienced challenges of recruiting informants for my study, which is ultimately why I did not set any geographical criterion. I considered it to be more constructive to focus on the amount of experience rather than the context of the experiences.

As the focus of my research was on experiences by professionals, I had initially decided that only professionals would be interviewed. This was partly due to the specific focus of my study, but also because I expected that it would be less comprehensive than interviewing youths. The time limit of this study was again a relevant factor while making this decision. However, after conducting all the interviews I found that there was a missing factor in the collected data. While the professionals arguably provided the study with a rich variety of experiences, it became apparent that the results would benefit from involving a youth's perspective. Bryman (2012 points out that "as an investigation proceeds, it may become apparent that groups will need to be interviewed who were not anticipated at the outset" (p. 425).

Two youths were therefore invited to share their experiences of receiving their family. I debated whether or not it would be appropriate to include youths in my study as the focus clearly is on practice experiences by professionals. However, because the area I intended to explore ultimately influences their situation I rather perceived that it would be inappropriate to not include their perspective. I found that it was necessary in order to enhance the holistic character of my study. An important note to their participation is that it is not meant as any validation of the experiences shared by the professionals.

4.2.1 Sampling techniques

The process of finding informants was time consuming and more challenging than I first anticipated. As a start, I made phone calls to each city districts to find relevant contact information. However, many of those who were contacted expressed that they did not have time to be involved in the study. This meant that the process of sampling informants had to be more pragmatic than I initially planned. Allowing a more flexible sampling approach helped ease the process of finding potential informants.

I scheduled the first interview after receiving contact information from a fellow student. In addition, I gained access to the following two informants with the help of my supervisor. Bryman (2012) refers to snowball sampling as a technique for generating contact information through other informants. This reflects my further access to informants, as the remaining interviews were scheduled through existing contacts.

I also had to be realistic while considering how many interviews I would conduct. However, the amount of interviews is mainly determined by the scope of the research and the amount of social groups involved (Bryman 2012). Due to the limited time available for this research and the lengthy process of finding informants, I decided to focus on quality rather than number of interviews. For example, the amount of 'groups' represented in the study was perceived as sufficient for my research focus. I decided that at least two representatives of

each group should be represented in order to maintain a balanced selection. My informants will be further introduced in the chapter regarding findings.

The process of finding informants proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of my study. In hindsight, the process might have benefited from being an earlier priority.

4.3 Data collection

Due to the aim of my study, I found that it would be natural to conduct interviews with professionals who could contribute with first hand experiences related to this process. I reflected upon various points when deciding what interview method would be most suitable for my focus. Bryman (2012) argues that when a researcher has "a fairly clear focus […] it is likely that the interviews will be semi-structured ones, so that the more specific issues can be addressed" (p. 472). Because the topic for my research was concentrated on family reunification, a semi-structured approach was perceived as most compatible with my focus.

An advantage with this method is that it allows flexibility in interview situations. This ensured that I could address specific issues during the interviews, which consequently enabled more perspectives to be expressed. In particular, this was helpful as my informants arrived from different areas. Although it was valuable that few restrictions were set as to how the interviews should proceed, I still had to prepare for the interviews to ensure a coherent focus.

An interview guide was therefore developed to ensure that certain areas were covered. The initial guide was only created for the professionals involved in the study. Bryman (2012) underlines how this does not have to be more specific than a brief list of memory points. He furthermore points out that one does not follow it slavishly and "questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees." (p. 471).

Following this, I did not prepare a set of specific questions that had to be answered. I rather divided the interview guide into three general questions that I wanted to go into. I focused on having questions that were open and that would allow my informants to discuss various part of their practice. This was important due to the exploratory nature of my research design. The questions emphasized their role, contribution and practical experiences in general.

Because the informants arrived from different backgrounds it was important to allow flexibility, but also to ensure a focus that would provide comparable data. This is why I created general questions as well as sub questions that could elicit more answers if needed. I did not consider the sub questions to be mandatory, however, they proved to be constructive in certain situations. For example, I encountered situations where the interviewee did not fully understand what I asked for and it was then valuable to have sub questions to help explain the purpose of the initial question.

The interview guide for the two youths was less comprehensive. This was partly because these interviews were scheduled on short notice, but also because I wanted them to share their experiences without too much involvement from my part. They were basically just asked to talk about their situation before and after their family arrived. However, also for these interviews it was valuable to have sub questions in case of unclear questions or short answers.

Before the interview process started, I conducted pilot interviews with former social work students I knew from earlier studies. This was a constructive way to see whether my questions

were clear, precise and comprehensible. As the interviews proceeded, I also made adjustments according to how I experienced them in the actual interview situations.

Besides preparing this guide, I also focused on how I could ensure a comfortable interview situation for my informants and what stress factors I could address in advance. For example, I let my informants decide when and where it should take place. This gave them an opportunity to decide the physical context of the interviews. An information sheet was also distributed for the professionals in advance. This allowed them to prepare and as such reduce the intensity of the actual interview situation. No such information sheet was prepared for the youths as these interviews were scheduled on short notice.

4.3.1 Communication

The most influential factor while conducting interviews relates to the quality of communication. Steinar Kvale (1997), a Norwegian psychologist, argues that the conversation is a fundamental part of human interaction. As the interviews proceeded, I encountered three potential obstacles. First, I had to decide what language to use during the interviews. Irvine et al. (2008) talks about the challenges of not knowing the original language of the informant. However, I perceived that Norwegian and Swedish were similar enough for both parties to understand. I expected that using these languages would cause less misunderstandings compared to English. I further anticipated that it would ensure a calmer interview situation because the informants would be likely to have more confidence in their native language.

The latter point is not equally valid for the youths who took part in this study as they did not have Swedish as their main language. Because none of them had sufficient English skills, I had to find alternatives. One of the youths spoke decent Swedish, which allowed the interview to be conducted with simplified language. The interview with the other youth required an interpreter and this will be further discussed below. The challenges related to transcriptions and translating quotes into English will be further discussed under the section regarding limitations.

Because I was not familiar with using an interpreter, I was concerned about the influence it could have on the interview process. This was especially related to the relatively personal character of the interview topic. However, as the alternative was to not conduct the interview I concluded that using an interpret was a better option. As a way to limit the influence of the interpreter, I decided to make use of a telephone interpreter. According to Karlsen & Haabeth (1998), this enhances anonymity as well as reducing the physical barriers of using an interpreter.

There are varied perspectives as to how involved an interpreter should be in the interview process. Some researchers argue that interpreters should be allowed to use own judgements about the use of follow up questions (Williamson et al., 2011). Before the interview started, I informed the interpreter about the study and my own position as a master student. As the interview proceeded, the interpreter sometimes had to ask for questions to be explained so that correct translations were made. In addition, the interpreter changed between using direct quotations from the youth and summarizing what the youth had said. In case of the latter, the quotes have not been used while presenting the results.

Lastly, one of the interviews were conducted as a group interview rather than individually. While using the snowball technique, one of the informants brought another person to the same

interview rather than asking for a separate one. Because this happened just before the interview I decided to continue as planned. Although it would involve a different interview approach I expected that it would not have considerable effect on the data. In fact, Hammersley & Atkinson (1996) argue that a group interview may soften the interview situation and make the informants more talkative.

The interaction between the informants during the interviews appeared to be a strength for the amount of information shared. Especially since the two informants had similar backgrounds it allowed them to discuss similar matters. Herbert Clark (1996) distinguishes between active and non active participants in group conversations. He points out how those present in a conversation will have different positions. To ensure a balanced engagement during the interviews, I focused on addressing questions for both. Another advantage with the group interview is that it is less time consuming (Jacobsen, 1993). Although this interview by far was the longest, it simultaneously generated twice as much data. It was in such a way a valuable help in an otherwise time consuming process of conducting interviews.

4.4 Interpretation of data

After conducting all the interviews, I regarded thematic analysis approach to be most suitable for the following interpretation of data. Bryman (2008) points out how this is one of the most common approaches to qualitative analysis. Although dividing data into themes is a quite general strategy it was still an effective way to identify the most relevant content of my empirical findings. Ryan and Bernard (2003) specify certain factors one should look for while distinguishing themes. Among other, they argue that repetitions, as well as similarities and differences, are important elements to look for. Because I was interviewing professionals of different backgrounds, these elements were particularly emphasized.

The process of analysing the collected data basically started while I was transcribing the interviews. As this is a time consuming procedure, I decided early that transcription should take place straight after each interview. This ensured a better recollection of the interview process, which enabled me to make notes of relevant contextual factors. It moreover allowed themes to emerge underway, which thus made it easier for me to make necessary adjustments of the interview guide.

The first step after conducting all the interviews involved coding the transcriptions. The interviews were thoroughly read and compromised into codes which could represent the content. Critics of coding have argued that it may lead to fragmented data and a loss of context (Bryman 2012; Coffey and Atkinson 1996). In particular, the latter point was addressed through the early stage of transcribing. Due to the risk of fragmented data I also focused on creating codes that represented the sentences they were based on.

The process of establishing themes is a step further on from the coding process (Braun and Clarke 2006). All the codes were compared and put in order by relevance, which initially allowed themes to emerge. Bryman (2012) talks about how identifying themes "requires the researcher to reflect on the initial codes that have been generated and to gain a sense of the continues and linkages between them" (p. 580). After identifying the main themes that occurred from the data, I could further allocate quotes and connect relevant theory to each of them. The established themes were based on the main content that derived from my

interviews. This ultimately allowed me to concretize my final research questions and formed the base for my later analysis and the results that followed.

4.5 Validation and reliability

Lincoln and Guba (in Bryman, 2012) have argued that qualitative research is in need of different criteria than quantitative research in order to assess validation and reliability. They propose two alternative criteria; trustworthiness and authenticity. In the following, I will present and discuss these two criteria in regards to my study.

For the trustworthiness of the research, they present four sub criteria one should consider during the research process: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The *credibility* of the study shows "that research is carried out according to the canons of good practice *and* submitting research findings to the members of the social world who were studied" (ibid., p. 390). This argues for the importance of providing an insight into the research process, which is the distinct aim of this chapter. The latter results will be distributed to all of the informants involved in the study.

The authors argue that the level of *transferability* must be assessed by those who read it. Whether or not the results are transferable to a specific context can only be decided by those it may be relevant for. It is therefore important to ensure that results are presented in thick descriptions. This provides the reader with a "database for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings" (ibid., p. 392). In the chapter regarding findings, I have thus focused on describing the context in which the quotes have been told.

While discussing *dependability* of the study, the authors suggest that the researcher should adopt an 'auditing' approach to the study. This means "ensuring that complete records are kept of all phases of the research process […] in an accessible manner" (ibid., p. 392). This will allow others to establish whether correct procedures have been followed. Although this might be more relevant for comprehensive research projects, certain requirements have been followed. For example, all written communication with my informants have been saved and notes from interviews are kept. I have moreover made reports of my supervisions, which includes reflections and plans made throughout the research project.

The last sub criteria relate to the *confirmability* of the study. The authors argue that although "complete objectivity is impossible in social research, the researcher can be shown to have acted in good faith" (ibid., p. 392). Specifically, the authors emphasize that one should not let personal values or own theoretical beliefs effect the result. This has especially been an important focus during the interviews, as the specific aim of this study has been to generate experiences of the informants. As described more thorough earlier, objectivity regarding theoretical beliefs have only been partly kept during the research process.

A second main criteria suggested by the authors relates to the *authenticity* of the study, which focuses on the issues related to the impact of the study. The author distinguishes five specific elements: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. The focus on *fairness* emphasizes that the researcher includes a representative selection of viewpoints. As described the previous section, it has been an important focus of my study to include professionals who could contribute with a variety of experiences and perspectives.

While discussing *ontological authenticity*, the authors asks whether the researcher helps "members to arrive at a better understanding of their social milieu" (ibid., p. 393). While the results are intended to enhance the understanding of existing practice, I moreover focused on allowing discussions during interviews, which may encourage reflection and self awareness.

The authors moreover emphasize the concept of *educative authenticity*, meaning that the study should help members understand different viewpoints among others in the social world. The informants represent different 'groups' of existing practice, which correspondingly provides the results with a broad set of viewpoints. The involvement of the youths has further generated a more holistic character to the later analysis.

Referring to *catalytic authenticity*, the authors asks whether the study is encouraging members to change their circumstances. Lastly, the authors talk about *tactical authenticity* while arguing for the researcher's potential of empowering members "to take necessary steps for engaging in action" (ibid., p. 393). Apart from the potential of strengthening existing practice, these points might be relevant for more vulnerable groups and I have thus not focused on them to large extent.

4.6 Limitations of study

One of the limitations of my results is that practice may differ between municipalities as well as within city districts. The experiences shared by my informants are moreover subjective and not necessarily representative for practice in general. It is therefore not the aim for my study to suggest that results are transferable to any given context. However, I would argue that my emphasis on connecting the findings to previous research in related fields may enhance the generalization of the data.

Another possible limitation relates to the limited amount of agencies represented in my study. The process of family reunification may involve a broad set of agencies and professionals and, although the rationale behind my choice of informants have been explained, the results might have been influenced by the specific background of each informant.

A third limitation relates to the process of translating data. 9 out of 10 interviews were conducted in Norwegian and Swedish, meaning that translations were done at two occasions. First, I transcribed all the interviews into Norwegian. Although very few uncertainties between these languages arose, I made sure to use a dictionary whenever I was in doubt. The same procedure was made while translating quotes into English, however, extra caution was made to ensure correct reproduction of the quotes. Both transcripts and recordings have been kept in case of any uncertainty. The translation process may still be regarded as a limitation of the study as neither Swedish or English is my native language, although not conducting the interviews or using English as communication were not deemed as better alternatives.

4.7 Ethical considerations

In this last section, I will reflect upon some ethical considerations relevant for my study. Steinar Kvale (2007) describes how ethical issues can arise on seven different stages when conducting interviews: thematising, designing, the interview situation, transcription, analysis, verification and reporting. These stages will be further described below.

First, the author describes *thematising* as a way for the researcher to clarify the motivations behind a study. He explains how "the purpose of an interview study should […] be considered with regard to improvement of the human situation investigated" (p. 4). The relevance and motivation of my study have been discussed earlier in this paper and will thus not be further emphasized.

While discussing the *design* of the study, Kvale (2007) talks about the ethical issues related to informed consent. He points out how this also relates to "securing confidentiality, and considering the possible consequences of the study for the subjects" (p. 4). The informants were told that the results would be anonymous and the data was treated confidentially. Still, they were specifically informed that the results of my study would be made available online. All informants were granted an opportunity to withdraw their involvement in the study at any time during the interviews. I did not prepare any written consent form, however, verbal consent was given by all informants after receiving information about the content and public availability of my study. In regards to the interviews with the youths, no consent written consent form was prepared as these were scheduled on short notice. For these interviews, extra consideration was made to explain the content and purpose of my research. Information was provided for them both before and after the interview, as well as ensuring that they had necessary contact information in case of questions after. It is further relevant to add that both of them were above the legal age of 18.

Kvale (2007) talks about the importance of preparing *the interview situation*. The author explains how interactions during the interviews may effect participants differently. The power imbalance between me and the informants was an aspect I tried to be aware of. In particular, this was relevant when preparing for the interviews with the two youths. Because they were asked to share relatively sensitive experiences, I tried to avoid being too direct and to let them express themselves freely.

When Kvale (2007) discusses the process of *transcribing* he emphasize the importance of confidentiality as well as treating the transcripts with caution. In the context of my study, recordings and transcriptions will only be kept until final grading is done. It will exclusively be available for me and the examinator upon request. Another important issue raised by Kvale (2007) is that the transcribed text must be loyal to oral statement of the interviewee. The transcriptions were only conducted based on recordings of interview sessions, however, two specific aspects challenged the transcription process. The first aspect relates to language and have been discussed earlier. Another challenge was that recordings of the two first interviews were found to be partly destroyed. As I discovered this straight after the interviews, I could recollect some of what the informants had said. I then sent an email to the relevant informants asking if they could validate these statements.

As he discusses the concept of *verification*, Kvale (2007) underlines the researcher's ethical responsibility to only present knowledge that is as secured and verified as possible. An important factor while presenting the results has been to clarify why I interpreted the data the way I did. For example, I have as far as possible tried to illustrate the context of how the quotes were told. Each quote will moreover be followed by a reference as to which informant it came from.

In regards to the *analysis* of the interviews, Kvale (2007) asks whether "the subject should have a say in how their statements are interpreted" (p. 4). The informants have not been

involved in the analysis of the collected data, although exceptions were made for the two first interviews due to problems with the recordings. Lastly, Kvale (2007) reflect upon the aspect of *reporting*, which refers to the impact of the research results. As mentioned, the informants have been informed about the prospect of publication. Although no personal information will be presented it has been important to ensure that the informants understood how the study will be used.

5. Findings

In the following chapter, I will present the key findings of my study. The chapter is divided into three main parts: identified influence of family reunification, reflections of practice and support provided by professionals. The sections will be introduced separately, and each of them will address a specific object of the study. The results presented are mainly based on the experiences of those professionals who took part in the study. However, certain sections will conclude with quotes from the youth who were invited to share their experiences. As a start to this chapter, I will give a short introduction of all the informants.

5.1 About the informants

The informants of this study have all been involved in the process of family reunification. In the following table, I will briefly present some basic information about the professionals, focusing on role and level of experience. A short presentation of the two youths will follow after.

	Role	Experience with unaccompanied minors	Experience with family reunification cases

Informant 1	Staff member at residential home	1 year	Been involved with 3 cases of family reunification
Informant 2	Staff member at residential home	5 years	Been involved with 2 cases of family reunification
Informant 3	Staff member at residential home	4 years	Been involved with 8-9 cases of family reunification
Informant 4	Trustee	5-6 years	Been involved with 7-8 cases of family reunification
Informant 5	Trustee	6-7 years	Been involved with 2 cases of family reunification
Informant 6	Trustee	6 years	Been involved with 5 cases of family reunification
Informant 7	Social Services	8 years at Social Services, 5-6 years with unaccompanied minors	Been involved with 10-15 cases of family reunification
Informant 8	Social Services	2 years	Been involved with 5 cases of family reunification

Informant 9: Youth, 18 years old. Lived in Sweden for 2 years, including last 3 months with his family.

Informant 10: Youth, 18 years old. Lived in Sweden for 2 years, including last 9 months with his family.

5.2 Identified influences of family reunification

A main theme that emerged from the interviews focused on what the professional identified through their practice regarding the influence family reunification had for the youths' situation. The informants were asked to talk about their experiences of the process both before and after the family arrived. While discussing different aspects of the process certain factors were repeatedly emphasized as challenging. This was mostly related to the influence family reunification had on the youths' situation. The professionals discussed the situation both prior to and after the family's arrival, although many of the factors were mentioned in both perspectives. However, what they expressed as main influences was often linked to a comparison between the situation before and after family arrival.

Some of the perspectives they shared were based on information they had received from the youth, while others were based on observations they had made themselves. It is still worth noting that it is the perception of the professionals which is described. The youths who were

involved in the study were therefore asked to talk about their experiences of receiving their family. They were mainly asked to elaborate about how their life before and after their family arrived. Both of the youths expressed satisfaction and relief about having their family here, while at the same time reflecting upon some changes in their daily lives. In the following section, I will present three main factors which has been frequently expressed by the informants.

5.2.1 Increased responsibility

One factor that was repeated by all informants focused on how family reunification often led to an increase of responsibility on the youth. This was mentioned as a challenge both prior to and after the arrival of the family. Several professionals expressed that the youth often seemed to have a responsibility of helping the family to arrive. In particular, one informant mentioned how she saw that the youth often had responsibility already before the family arrived:

> (...) the child often has a very big pressure from home about the asylum process, how to get their family here and things like that.
> (Informant 7, social services)

It was moreover pointed out how the responsibility often did not reflect the influence the youth actually had on the process, resulting in a pressured situation for the youth. This was expressed by one informant as she was referring to a recent case:

> It has gone so far that he doesn't want to answer when mom calls because she nags a lot on him.
> (Informant 4, trustee)

This illustrates what many of the professionals expressed about identifying the increase of responsibility already before the family arrives. Yet still, most of the informants talked about how they saw an increase after reunification had happened. Although emphasizing the relief many of the youths tended to show when receiving their family, the professionals did express concerns regarding the amount of responsibility involved. This was pointed out by one professional while she reflected upon her own experience:

> I have often noticed that the youth who have been here receives a great deal of responsibility. One is supposed to be an interpreter and one must show mom and dad and siblings around.
> (Informant 7, social services)

Another informant working at a residential home was asked about what the youths usually talked about after their family had arrived, where she answered:

> That they are personnel for their family
> (Informant 3, residential home)

She further elaborated on this:

> (…) a lot of it is about how they find a lot of it stressful, and that often the families are quite big and that they are the ones who know where the store is, what to do now.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

Several informants talked about how the youth often had to help their family with language difficulties, finding their way around etc. What the professionals identify as increased responsibility appears to be linked to tasks that parents or other family members lack knowledge to perform. It was repeatedly mentioned through different interviews how the youth often tend to develop a sort of leader role within the family due to his knowledge of society and language. In particular, one of the informants mentioned how she often saw that the youth had to supplement the parents' lack of societal knowledge:

> The youth who have been in Sweden the longest and knows Sweden best becomes like a society guide that has to show where everything is.
> (Informant 7, social services)

The kind of responsibility placed on the youths appears to relate to a lack of societal resources one must assume are frequently absent among newly arrived immigrants. As such, this can hardly be understood as an irregular shortcoming. What is more challenging, however, is if these missing resources are replaced by the youths alone. Schaefer et al. (in Oakley, 1992) talk about how social networks may provide different kinds of support. As a newly arrived family is likely to have a limited network, the youth might become the one who supplements the lack of network resources. The examples found here indicates that the informational support provided by the youth is an important part of the family's social capital (ibid.).

    As Ryan et al. (2008) points out, this kind of support does not demand emotional involvement and one may argue that an access to formal networks also could reduce the youth's responsibility. However, other kinds of support, that being extended networks or formal support measures, may not involve the same availability as a daily life requires. Consequently, the youth might become the main supplement for the family's lack of societal resources. One of the youth talked about how he often had to support his family because they did not know the language or where things were:

> Some hours I help to buy food, go to the store and buy something. For example, today I bought food. Show where you go to the store, go in and say how much it costs. (…) If they have a meeting with social services or something, then I have to show where it is.
> (Informant 9, youth)

When the same youth was asked about the biggest difference between living at the residential home and living with his family, he said:

> It is really good that I live with my family, but I can't do what I want. (…) When, for example today, I went with my sister to her school and showed her to her teacher. And then I went to my school.
> (Informant 9, youth)

What he expressed as a main difference of his own situation appears to demonstrate the responsibility he now had of helping his family. Although he emphasizes the satisfaction of living with his family he also points out how it sometimes restricts his own situation. He was earlier in the interview asked about his own school work, and he then mentioned how it could be challenging to find time to focus:

> Before my family came, when they lived in [home country], then school went okay and when we had tests. But now it is very difficult. I help my family go to school. I don't have time to read.
> (Informant 9, youth)

The other youth emphasized that he was happy to live with his family and that he considered his life to be better now than at the time he lived in the residential home. Still, he also pointed out that he sometimes had to devote his time to support his family:

> When I was alone I was engaging myself much more in my studies. But after that, with my father here, when he has some problems and cannot find things, I go with him, show him things, I spend little time with him, that's why some of my time now goes to help my father. Until he's custom and until he's used to this place.
> (informant 10, youth)

As the latter youth points out, the support he provides for his father seems to relate to a temporary lack of knowledge or skills due to his position as newly arrived. Also the first youth describe a situation where he had to provide support based on his knowledge of society and language. The responsibility these youths are describing thus appears to be addressing a immediate inadequacy among their parents. It may therefore relate to a situation that will change as soon as their parents develop necessary knowledge and skills. The time progress of this, however, is more unclear and the burden of responsibility seems to be present at least for a period. As earlier studies have shown, young people leaving care may experience challenges while receiving a responsibility that previously was cared for by the public (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2014;). The youth who participated in this study, as with many others who receive their family, have prior to the reunification been under public care. When the family arrives they are expected to take over this responsibility, although for newly arrived families this may not always be as attainable.

   As the results indicates, a lack of society knowledge and language skills complicate the performance of daily tasks and demonstrate a weak social capital (Burt, 2001). The youths stronger social position appears to become the available resource to supplement these shortcomings. The responsibility they face may thus be similar to what other youth leaving public care are faced with. Although increased responsibility is something that relates to all

young people when leaving home, research points out how those leaving public care are faced with specific needs (Dixon et al., 2008; Stein, 2012; Ward, 2001). Although previous research has focused on different contexts it is apparent that also family reunification may involve similar aspects. What differentiate those leaving home may relate to how they normally will have an informal network to ask for support. Those leaving public care, including youth who are reunited with a newly arrived family, have less access to this. The study of Höjer & Sjöblom (2014) pointed out that formal networks was regarded as an important factor when needing practical support. This kind of support requires knowledge about society (Ryan et. al. 2008) which the youth is likely to have more of as they have stayed longer in Sweden.

5.2.2 Reduced support

A second factor which have been frequently discussed in the interviews, indicates that family reunification involves a reduced individualized support for the minor. Evidently, this factor is closely linked to the increased responsibility the youths tend to get. When a family arrives it is normally expected that the youth move back to their family within a month. The public involvement is diminished as the family is expected to take over the role as carers. Many informants described how the changing circumstances became particular visible when the youths move back to his family. One of the professionals said that

> (…) it is a lot of individualized support that disappears when the family arrives and it is often hard for them to lose this.
> (Informant 1, residential home)

Another informant further explained how this change often contrasted the previous life:

> If one has been in Sweden as an unaccompanied minor for some years then one has received quite a lot, and there are many adults around that cares and one has an own room and so on. And the situation [when family arrives] often gets very difficult, it gets cramped and one has less money and things like that.
> (Informant 8, social services)

The emphasis on reduced individualized support appears to be a main concern for these professionals. It seems to exist a worry that the transition from public care might be so contrasting that it creates an obstacle for a positive reunification process. It was moreover expressed concerns for the youth's individual development due the changing situation. This was mostly related to how less individual focus could effect school performance and limit their independence. In particular, one professional expressed frustration over how the reduced individualized focus influenced the youth:

> And I feel that we have kind of worked for 2 years to get this youth very independent, and when the family arrives I often see a decrease because that independent part goes back.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

The same informant also described how she found it difficult to accept the impact this could have:

> (…) it is hard to see them slow their development when the family arrives.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

Especially the professionals working at residential home expressed concerns about the influence family reunification had on the youth. It appeared to exist a conflict between the focus they had emphasized while caring for the youth, compared to the support provided for them after. While the professionals focus on the youth's individual development, it seems like the support available after the family arrives shifts towards a more family oriented focus. As mentioned, it is the intention that the family takes over the responsibility of caring for the youth. However, several of the professionals expressed that the need for practical support for the youth was not reflected in the support available after reunification. The American report on family reunification evidence (2011) argued in contrast that targeted services that meet individualized needs are an important factor for a positive outcome of reunification. Many of the professionals talked about how the need for continued support often became visible after the youths had move in with their family. For example, one professional described that the youths frequently kept in touch after moving out of the residential home:

> It has happened several times that they have contact with us for a long time after they move out. Sometimes they call and ask about things and other times they come to visit.
> (Informant 1, residential home)

The perception that the youths need individual support also after reunification was shared by several informants. In particular, it seemed to be a common notion that the need for continued support was related to the increased responsibility of the youth. The American report (2011) also pointed out how the assessment of strengths and needs of families and children are important factors to ensure a positive outcome. While the family takes over the care responsibility upon their arrival, it suggests that they have the resources to provide the same support for the youth which was previously covered by the public. However, it might not be reasonable to expect that a newly arrived family would possess such resources. As the youth is likely to be in a stronger position the responsibility may thus be left with him. The need for continued support for the youth may therefore exist at least during a period after reunification happens. Notably, this is not due to a lack of parental capacity but rather a reasonable lack of resources based on their position as newly arrived immigrants. This demonstrates a risk newly arrived families may face due to a weak social capital (Coleman 1988; Bourdieu & Wacquent 1992; Putnam 1993). Following Burt's (2011) conception, it may challenge their ability of pursuing their ends. One of the professionals mentioned how she felt that it was the family who were in need of support, not the youth:

I don't think it is the child who needs it but the family who needs support. (…) I don't think the child needs any specific support. Most of them want to live with their family if it exists the right preconditions.
(Informant 8, social services)

The informant here brings up a valid point. While family reunification appears to entail an increased responsibility for the youth it is not necessarily the reduced individual focus that is causing this. As both the professionals and the youth involved in this study has pointed out, it is fundamentally a positive experience to be reunited with one's family. This is in line with how Barnert et. al. (2015) argued for promoting family reunification whenever possible due to the overall positive experiences. It remains apparent that the family's position as newly arrived is something that needs to be addressed. As such, the professional correctly argues that the family is in need of support. However, the same professional also points to an important factor when discussing a specific kind of introduction support provided for parents:

That's the idea behind it [that the child is being released some of the responsibility]. But the introduction support is not present 24 hours every day. I think it's something like a couple of days a week. But it's not in that scale the child... I think most children misses quite a lot of school the first period.
(Informant 8, social services)

As argued, it seems likely that newly arrived families are in need of support to ensure that less responsibility is placed on the youth. It is nevertheless a relevant point that such support may not equal the availability of the support provided by the youth. The parents' lack of knowledge and language skills demonstrates a reliance on the support generated through their social networks, such as access to informational support (Ryan et al. 2008). The need for this kind of support may appear at times when they do not have access to a formal network and the youth consequently remains the available resource.

Although one can argue for family oriented support measures to enhance social capital it does not necessarily mean that individual focus should not be combined. In fact, it appears as though the youths who receive their family may experience not only a reduced individual support but also a reduced social position. When they are under public care they are provided with emotional, informational and instrumental support. However, while being reunited with their family, albeit with the fundamental emotional value attached, their access to informational and instrumental support appears to be diminished. The value of being reunited with their family can be understood based on Reynolds' (2011) concept of bonding emotional ties which ensures a sense of belonging in society. In contrast, bridging ties implies that the youth also need to establish a connection to other social groups to access the resources that are available through them (ibid.). If the available support is not allowing such connections to develop or to be maintained it may indicate that a different focus is needed. Reducing individual support for the minor thus seem to reduce their social capital.

5.2.3 Contradicting expectations

The third factor that came to show while discussing the influence of family reunification was that it involves a good deal of contradicting expectations. It seemed to be a common understanding among the professionals that most youths wanted their family to arrive. However, several of the professionals had identified how they quite often were reluctant to live with their family. The desire of being reunited with their family did not always appear to be reflected in the desire to change their current situation. Many of the professionals described how they found it hard to prepare the youths for these challenges. As their desire to have their family come was so much emphasized, it did not always ensure realistic expectations.

Interestingly, this aspect was mostly emphasized by those working at social services. Also the trustees acknowledged that it was a challenging part of their work. This might relate to the fact that they have a more practical role in the process of applying for family reunification. Still, the professionals at residential homes are often those who are most frequently in contact with the youths. They are seemingly in a better position of preparing the youths for their situation after care, which has been emphasized as an important part of ensuring stable transitions (Wade, 2011). It was therefore interesting how this potential obstacle was less emphasized by them.

Many professionals expressed how the youth tended to focus purely on the positive aspects of receiving their family. In particular, one of them mentioned that it was difficult to prepare them for possible difficulties because they were so happy to have their family arrive:

> So we try to talk to the children about how it will be, so they don't become totally shocked when the change happens. Something which is really difficult because most of the children are just really happy to have their family here. (…) We can probably be better at trying to [prepare]… But at the same time they should be allowed to be happy also.
> (Informant 8, social services)

The emotional value of being reunited with their family appears to be recognized by this professional. At the same time, she expresses concerns as to whether the emotional experience can exceed the potential challenges followed by the changing situation. Another social worker expressed doubts whether the expectations could live up to the reality:

> Many have a very romantic image of how things are going to be. That everything will be solved when the family arrives. But everyone might not be prepared. One has lived separately for many years, one has lived separate lives and one has developed in different ways.
> (Informant 7, social services)

The separation period appears to be the main concern here, while emphasizing how the youth and the family have lived apart for an extended period of time. It was emphasized how the youth and the family had developed in two different contexts. As discussed by Kagiticibasi (2004), the notion of what position a child should have in a family may differ between

Western ideals of individualism and more collectivistic cultures. The context in which the youths have developed in might then contrast the expectations the family brings from their own culture.

The period of separation between the youth and the family was further discussed during the same interview. The professional continued to elaborate about how the expectations of receiving one's family did not always reflect the challenges that could follow:

> Those I have met have just been very happy. Very happy that their family is coming and think it will be amazing. And then they don't want to talk about what is difficult. Some of them haven't met their family for 6-7-8 years. That is a really long time. So it is obvious that it gets difficult.
> (Informant 7, social services)

This professional described the time they had spent apart as a potential obstacle for how well the reunification process would go. It was expressed concerns as to how the time apart may have created a social gap which could become visible when they moved in together. This goes in line with what Barnert et. al. (2015) found in their study, that it tends to exist a class and cultural gap when family reunification happens. The social worker mentioned that such a gap could cause an imbalance in the family:

> The biggest challenge is that it is a completely new life for the family, and that there is one person who has head start. That the youth has a head start in this new country and that he gets a big responsibility.
> (Informant 7, social services)

It was further discussed how the separation period also could have created a cultural gap between the youth and his family. The social worker expressed concerns as to how the cultural background of the family would influence the reunification process. It was pointed out how the youths normally had adapted into their new situation and that this could be contrasting the expectations of the parents'.

> But I think about, that when the child left the family some years ago, then the child was for one thing younger and for another thing lived in a different context. So I think it is difficult for the family to understand that it is not the same child now, that it is a different child. (Informant 7, social services)

It appeared to be a concern that the Swedish context is not compatible with the cultural background these families arrive from. As Kagiticibasi (2004) points out, family life in Western societies are more often characterized by autonomy and self reliance. The social worker's concerns can thus be rationalized based on the sometimes contrasting backgrounds these families arrive from. Similarly, their concerns might enhance the experience of cultural differences, as the youths are positioned in between both contexts. This could complicate what Kagiticibasi (2004) argue for when emphasizing that autonomy and dependence not necessarily have to be in conflict.

It still seems apparent that cultural aspects may be a potential obstacle for a positive reunification process. Some of the trustees referred to experiences they had picked up from the youths themselves. They described how the youths tended to be worried about the cultural differences of moving back to their family. For example, some of the professionals had listened to the youth describe how their current life would change when their family arrived:

> He has said so as well, with surprise; am I suppose to live with mom when she arrives. […] that wasn't what he had imagined. Even though we have said so earlier but it hasn't sunk in.
> (Informant 4, trustee)

The same professional elaborated further, describing how this youth had considered his current situation as not compatible with a life together with his family:

> I mean, all of this, he has kind of been reflecting, that the life I live now is not okay when my mom arrives.
> (Informant 4, trustee)

This concern indicates a conflict between how the youth has adapted into his new context and what will be expected when his family arrives. Similarly, Barnert et. al. (2015) found in their study that the youths tended to struggle with the notion of how they would fit into their families when being reunited. Another trustee referred to a conversation she had with a youth who had received his family, where he had expressed that the changing situation was difficult to adapt to:

> The one boy here has said that it [the situation after family arrived] is a bit more difficult because he is not allowed to go outside by his mom. Then the old rules that the parents have brought with them come and are placed on this boy. He had a different freedom before, he thinks.
> (Informant 6, trustee)

From what these professionals' shared, it appears to exist some contradiction between the desire of getting their family here and the experiences of having them here. As they describe, it seems like the positive aspects are in focus ahead of arrival and that any obstacles of being reunited are left aside. While Kagiticibasi (2004) argued for a combination of autonomy and maintaining close family bonds, this may not be reflected in the reality some of the youths face. As such, it shows how cultural difference may be a risk for a positive outcome of family reunification. It further demonstrates how professional involvement might be a necessary if individual autonomy is challenged. This may address specific needs the family might have due to their position as newly arrived. Although the latter is a risk factor alone it remains likely that the period of separation will to some extent impose certain cultural challenges. As he was talking about his experience of now living with his family, this was also expressed by one of the youth's:

It feels a bit difficult to live with them. We don't understand each other. Yes, 5 years we didn't see each other, we didn't live together. They are new right now. They don't know how one lives here. My mom wants me to do what she wants. Do you understand? And I want to do what I myself want to. But we don't understand each other. It is difficult.
(informant 9, youth)

What this youth points out seems to illustrate the challenge of having lived separately for an extended period. It is expressed that the time apart have created a certain gap which makes it difficult to understand each other. These difficulties might be enhanced by the specific situation the family is in, and as such it does not necessarily suggest that culture is the main obstacle. It is still fair to expect that the separation period may create a certain distance, which eventually could intensify existing obstacles.

5.3 Reflecting upon practice

An essential part of the interviews focused on how professionals experienced current practice. They were asked to reflect upon how they experienced existing support as well as how they perceived their own position within the system. The professionals discussed both their own role in the process, external factors and generally how they experienced current practice. Notably, all of them possess different roles and different areas of responsibility. All of the professionals were therefore asked to elaborate about their own specific experiences. Through these reflections, I could identify certain connections between what they expressed. This furthermore resulted in a distinguished analysis of specific role characterizations. In the following section, I will therefore present three typical characteristics that came out of the interviews.

5.3.1 Insufficient role

A first description that was frequently expressed by the professionals indicated that they found it challenging to not have sufficient influence of the process. It is necessary to stress that it was not their contribution that was expressed as insufficient, but rather how their role sometimes became insufficient due to circumstantial factors. In particular, this related to external factors they had little control over. The insufficient role was mostly described as a challenge in relation to the process before the family arrived. The professionals working at social services both mentioned how the housing situation challenged their work:

The biggest challenge today is the housing situation. That makes it really difficult.
(Informant 8, social services)

The other social worker talked about how the housing situation created a difficult start for the families when they arrived. She appeared to agree with the first social worker that this was a main challenge they had to face:

The housing market is not the best and it is difficult to find an apartment. So that's the biggest question, where should the family live?

(Informant 7, social services)

The housing situation is naturally not something the social workers can influence. It is nevertheless a factor they have to relate to as it will influence their practice. External factors were further mentioned as an obstacle by several informants. Some of them expressed that it was hard to relate to an unpredictable process. This was especially mentioned as challenging when dealing with a bureaucratic system:

> So this with reunification is maybe the most difficult thing we work with, because there are so many different situations that occur all the time. We can never learn it.
> (Informant 5, trustee)

As expressed by this informant, it is challenging to relate to a process where things are constantly shifting. The process of family reunification will evidently involve a good deal of unstable factors which may cause obstacles when confronted with them. While the other informants emphasized how contradicting expectations challenged the work of preparing the youths for upcoming changes, some of the staff at residential homes focused more on the unpredictable process as an obstacle:

> We try to explain what is going to happen. Sometimes it can happen so sudden that there is almost no time to prepare the child. It is difficult to prepare in such short time.
> (Informant 2, residential home)

As described here, it appears like the unpredictable aspect of their practice is challenging their ability to provide sufficient support. Røkenes & Hanssen (2012) talks about how professional competence is a joint effort of relational skills and technical competence. In particular, Bloke (2012) pinpoints that the technical competence of a social worker may enhance clients' ability to cope more effectively and efficiently in their everyday life. This argues for the relevance of a specific social work background among those who are involved in the work of facilitating stable reunification processes.

It still seemed like their professional competence was limited by external factors. As such, their frustration resembles a kind of conditional influence of the process. While it is their role to support the youths in the process, they also have to deal with external factors they can do little about. This does not only relate to society structures but also to their assigned mandate. The support they provide is determined by the pre-set goals of the organizational context they belong to. Blok (2012) argues how this is challenging as it "do not allow for judgments to be varied to take into account human variation" (p. 113). Several of the professionals expressed how it was hard to clarify their own role for the youth. This was particularly illustrated by those working at residential homes. For example, one of them mentioned that it was difficult to justify upcoming changes for the youth:

> It is not always easy to explain for the youth why this support [the one they have before family arrives] is removed.
> (Informant 1, residential home)

Another staff member at a residential home exemplified how this sometimes resulted in them being blamed for the changing situation:

> Sometimes they can feel a bit betrayed by us if they all of a sudden are told they have to move out. They don't always understand that we are not the ones making the decision.
> (Informant 2, residential home)

It seems like the limited influence these professionals have in the process of family reunification are not reflected in the expectations they are faced with. In fact, it may seem like their close involvement with the youths puts them in a position as a kind of negotiator between the youth and the system. This might challenge their ability of creating trusting relationships with the youths, which previous research has deemed as an important element of working with unaccompanied minors (Kohli, 2005). While their role involves care and support they also have to relate to administrative goals, which ultimately could contrast their emotional involvement with the youth (Shulman, 2008).

It was furthermore expressed by some professionals how it was frustrating to not have enough influence to hurry the process of getting the family here. One social worker in particular mentioned how it was frustrating to maintain a passive role:

> What I would have wanted to do is to influence the Migration Agency. But that's an authority that has so much to do. (…) But for the child I have in my chair, I would've wanted to press the fast forward button, but I can't.
> (Informant 7, social services)

The same social worker had, however, found a way to enhance the situation:

> (…) to call isn't the best way, it is better to send an e-mail, so lately I have been sitting down with the youth and gotten him to formulate my e-mail. What he wants to say to the case worker, why this youth thinks that the case of his mom and dad should be prioritized, and with his own words. And it has actually had repercussions, because I have received an answer much faster when I use their letters.
> (Informant 7, social services)

What this social worker describes at first appears to be a frustration over the insufficient influence many of the professionals expressed. It is therefore interesting how she had involved the youth as a way of enhancing this influence. Røkenes & Hanssen (2011) emphasizes the importance of using the client's knowledge about own situation as a way to understand their reality. What this social worker demonstrates appears to be a good example of this, as she is using the youth's own words while communicating with the agency. This furthermore demonstrates how professionals might become the bridging ties for those who lack societal influence (Reynolds, 2011).

5.3.2 Restrictive role

The second characteristic that I could distinguish related to how the professionals sometimes appeared to maintain a restrictive role. As they discussed their involvement in the process they tended to focus on their role as professionals. Their contribution seemed to be based on how they perceived their professional mandate. In fact, when they were asked to talk about their contribution to the process, it was commonly described what their role was limited to. They often expressed how they tried to maintain their assigned position within the system. Accordingly, Christoffersen (2011) points out how the social work profession fits into a system level which ultimately sets limit to its practice. As opposed to the insufficient role that was described in the previous section, it appeared to also exist a willingness to restrict their involvement. This was not due to a reluctance of being involved, but rather a desire to concentrate their influence to what their professional role allowed. For example, one social worker described her responsibility as part of legal framework:

> In legal terms, then we only have responsibility for the child 30 days after the family arrives. And then they enter the adult´s case file, just like any other child in Sweden with his parents.
> (Informant 8, social services)

What she describes resembles a restrictive involvement based on the mandate she has been assigned through her position in an administrative context. A staff member at one of the residential homes discussed how she tried to facilitate cooperation with other agencies. She described how she often felt that they had a better potential of involving in the process, due to their close contact with the youth. It was expressed how she therefore did not mind taking more responsibility than what here role involved. However, she also mentioned that she tried to be aware of the consequences of taking on too much responsibility:

> And then, one has to be a bit careful, because if you involve like I do, then you can end up getting all the responsibility.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

This suggests that although there might exist a desire to be more involved than what a professional role entails there is also a degree of sustainable responsibility. While the desire to contribute might be strong it is relevant that also the capacity of involvement is equally present. The professionals' reluctance might thus be necessary in order for them to exercise their competence, such as the relational aspect of their work (Røkenes and Hanssen, 2012). Several of the informants expressed how they restricted their involvement in order to maintain the focus of their role. It appeared to be emphasized how their specific focus was an essential part of their contribution to the process. This was mentioned by several informants, for example one who argued that her specific focus was complimented by other agencies involved:

> My focus is on the child, then there are other agencies that focus on the adults. So my focus is on the child I have.

(Informant 7, social services)

The reasoning behind such a specific focus appears to be justified based on the division of responsibility within the structure of those involved. As pointed out, this might be a way to ensure enough leeway for competent practice. In particular, it was emphasized by one of the trustees how their role was limited to the mission they were assigned:

> We are very clear that we are trustees for the children, not for the children's family.
> (Informant 4, trustee)

The specific responsibility of their role was further expressed as targeting the needs of the youth:

> It is very important that we stick to our role, that one is a support person for the youth, not the family.
> (Informant 4, trustee)

The support provided seems to be motivated by the perception that individual needs must be safeguarded. This is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of targeted services that address individualized needs (e.g. Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011; Höjer and Sjöblom, 2014). Although the professionals at times expressed a restrictive attitude of involving more than their responsibility entailed they did not oppose the prospect of family reunification. In fact, all of the informants mentioned that they would motivate family reunification and that being part of a family was fundamental for the youth. Even if this did not appear to diminish the focus of individual attention, it corresponds with Barnet et al. (2015) emphasis on promoting family reunification whenever possible.

5.3.3 Exceeding role

The third characteristic I recognized in the interviews stands in contrast to the previous two. While listening to the professionals, I could identify how they sometimes tended to exceed their own role. This did not relate to them exceeding legislative regulations, but rather how they provided support beyond their assigned responsibility. It appeared to exist a conscious motivation to allow such flexibility of their role if it would benefit the youth. Interestingly, this motivation was identified mostly among the staff at residential homes and the trustees. They expressed that their close connections with the youths drove them to sometimes be more involved than what was required of them.

Despite the emphasis on maintaining their professional mandate they still demonstrated a flexibility towards the pre-given structures of their role. The experiences of having an insufficient influence did not seem to prevent this engagement either. Some of the professionals gave examples of how they sometimes took on more responsibility than they normally would. One of the examples illustrated how this could feel like a meaningful contribution that did not demand too much effort:

I mean, I helped a girl recently to fill in an application about residence permit, and I did that in a few minutes, but for her it was priceless. Plus, I think it was fun because it was many years since we last had contact, so I was pleased she wanted help.
(Informant 4, trustee)

Another professional underpinned this, while mentioning how she felt that the emotional bond she had with the youth encouraged her to provide additional support:

And maybe this is not a part of my role either, because he doesn't live here anymore. And I feel that I do this because we have a good relationship, and I know that it takes 10 minutes or 15 minutes of my time, but for him it means everything.
(Informant 3, residential home)

Both of these quotes appear to emphasize the meaningful reward of providing support beyond their responsibility. The engagement in both examples seem to be stimulated by the emotional relationship they had established with the youth. This illustrates how personal and professional involvement often are linked when working with people (Shulman, 2008). This might also explain why the motivation to provide additional support was identified among those informants who have the closest contact with the youths. The connections they developed may have set the premise for their flexibility to exceed their role. One social worker at the social services mentioned that she did not feel they always needed to continue the contact with the youth. However, she expressed that the close connections the youth had established with other professionals could be meaningful to continue:

The child has often lived at the residential home or family home for several years, and then they are very important. And then I think it is really nice if they can stay in contact. (…) But many children have been moved around a lot and have not established the same emotional relationship. So it depends what the child needs. But it is very nice if the residential home is there and keep in contact with the child.
(Informant 8, social services)

She points out that the relationship the youth has developed may determine the need for continued contact. Although the professional engagement is over there may still exist an emotional attachment that goes beyond administrative restrictions. This illustrates how the youths may develop what Reynolds (2011) talked about as bonding ties. Shulman (2008) points out how separation from a meaningful relation may involve complex and ambivalent feelings for client. If it is difficult to maintain the relationship because of changing roles it may challenge the purpose of further contact. This points to the importance of being aware of how a professional role may influence relationships (Kokkin 2005). One of the staff members at a residential home further expressed how they tried to enable a continued contact with the youth:

> There is no formal contact [with the youth] after they have moved out. We still want them to be able to contact us if they want to. This often depends on the relationship one has had.
> (Informant 1, residential home)

Also this quote emphasises how continued contact is based on the existing relationship with the youth. It may seem, in fact, that the quality of the relationship becomes so decisive that it remains as an ultimate condition for whether or not continued support exists. Arguably, the flexibility demonstrated by the professionals is of great value for those who do establish these relationships. However, if the access to continued support is so dependent on this factor alone it may not address those who for some reason do not develop close ties. This argues for a more stable access to support, which does not solely depend on the quality of relationships. It might benefit the youth if access to support was institutionalized rather than conditional. This supports existing research emphasizing that access to support should be based on individual assessments of needs and level of maturity (Höjer & Sjöblom 2014; Eide 2012). One of the professionals expressed how she felt there existed a lack of long term focus in the process of family reunification:

> Because now, when the family arrives, then our connection is broken. I would've liked to see a more planned and thought through way of working with the family.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

On of the trustees further expressed that she did see the need for continued contact with the youth after the family arrived. She argued that it was not a matter of parental inadequacy, but rather a lack of knowledge about society that created this need:

> There is so much one might want to do even for children who get their parents here, but we can't because then we are gone, then the mom is here. And she is maybe brilliant in all ways, but she knows nothing about the society.
> (Informant 6, trustee)

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the youths tend to become a kind of society guide for their family. This professional therefore points to a relevant factor which may underpin the need for continued involvement with the family. In particular, it demonstrates how newly arrived families often are in need of practical support while getting accustomed to a new context. However, it has also been pointed out earlier in this chapter how this kind of support may be insufficient. The need for societal knowledge often appear more frequently than what the available support will address. This is akin to what Lidén et al. (2012) found in their study on living conditions for unaccompanied minors in reception centres. Their report pointed out how relational support could be challenged due to the instable presence of professionals. It may thus be necessary to facilitate a kind of support that would ensure a more stable access. A professional from one of the residential homes exemplified how they could be a potential resource for the family:

I think that it would be good if we could work with the family. (…) So that we at the residential home could say to social services; when the family arrives, we can take care of this family. Then we can during a 6-month period work with the family. (…) Which enables us to follow the youth all the way from the family arrives until they have been here for 6 months.

(Informant 3, residential home)

Although this might not be possible for all residential home, it argues for a more holistic approach in supporting the family. It further underpins the benefit of institutionalizing a kind of support that would enable professionals to continue their engagement. Accordingly, Ryan et. al. (2008) mention that practical and instrumental support is often provided by weak ties as they do not demand emotional involvement. Notably, the authors exemplify such ties as neighbours and colleagues. However, as such resources might not exist during the first period after a family arrives, professionals might thus prove to be important persons in their network. Facilitating such network support during a transitional period may furthermore allow professionals to take part in the process of enhancing a family's social capital. It does not require permanent involvement rather than a mean for establishing the bridging ties which may connect the family to other social groups (Reynolds 2011).

5.4 Support provided by professionals

The third main topic I focused on in during the interviews related to professional contribution in the process of family reunification. The informants were asked to discuss what they found to be the most important contributions of professionals. Based on this, they talked about own experiences of providing support as well as reflecting upon possible improvements. While closely linked to the previous section on role characteristics, this topic focused on distinguishing the different kinds of support provided by professionals. From this, I have been able to identify certain factors that appear to represent their contribution in the process. An essential part of this categorization has been to compare and draw parallels of their practice. The different roles of each professional have introduced explicit resemblance of the various contributions. In the following section, I will therefore present two main distinctions of the support provided by professionals.

5.4.1 Professionally motivated support

The first category identified through the interviews illustrate a professionally motivated support. This shows how the informants provides support based on the regulations of their professional role. Their involvement is motivated by the responsibility they are assigned through an administrative context. Interestingly, this kind of support was identified as a main contribution among the staff members at residential homes. Although they appeared to have less focus on restricting their involvement, several of them mentioned how they had to relate to external decisions as a part of their practice. The extent to which they involve seemed often to be determined by their professional mandate. Providing additional support would therefore entail that they go beyond their assigned responsibility. As their involvement in the process is mainly prior to the family's arrival, it was also the dominant focus while reflecting upon their own contribution.

When asked about what they perceived as important contribution among professionals, several of them expressed how they tried to use their role to ease the process for the youth. They mentioned how this often involved conveying information about the process and relevant agencies. One of the staff members mentioned how this felt as an important contribution from their position:

> I feel that it is an enormous advantage if the residential home has someone who knows how things work. (…) Because when the youth feels that this is a person who has done it before (…) that can also calm the situation a bit.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

The emphasis on knowledge as an important part of their practice is consistent with what Røkenes & Hanssen (2012) described as technical competence. This relates to the knowledge and skills professionals make use of while engaging with clients. The positive influence it was suggested to have for the youths' situation further demonstrates the relevance of relational skills. Accordingly, research emphasizes the value of practical support while establishing relations (Eide and Eide, 2004). Another staff member emphasized how her involvement mainly facilitated cooperation:

> In practical terms it's a lot about how the cooperation works with the Trustee.
> (Informant 1, residential home)

The coordinating role she described was emphasized by many of the staff members. For example, one of them expressed how they often conveyed contact information as a part of their involvement:

> What I can do from the residential home is to help them get in touch with for example the Red Cross. (…) And then we have a lot of contact with those working at the Migration Agency.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

This shows how the professionals appear to provide a kind of practical support for the youth. It further demonstrates how the professionals seem to be an important resource for the youth's social capital. This goes in line with what Ryan et al. (2008) discussed when emphasizing the different kinds of resources that a social network provides. It illustrates how the professionals become an important part of the youth's social network. Moreover, Hage et. al. (1996) described how the social structures between individuals and their social groups is a source for social capital. It seems like the professionals become an important link between the youth and their access to other social resources. Again, it illustrates how the professional relationship may become a part of what Reynolds (2011) said about bridging ties as a way to connect different social groups. Although the professional bond is only present for a limited period it may still connect the youth to resources that are relevant after they leave. For example, the previous informant also mentioned how she tried to teach the youth how to sort things out for themselves:

I sometimes think that I shouldn't just book [an appointment], but that they join in and see how it works.

(Informant 3, residential home)

This demonstrates how their professional role can be used to empower the youth by providing knowledge they can benefit from after the professional relationship ends. Accordingly, Røkenes & Hanssen (2012) argues for *empowering communication* [author's translation] as a way to emancipate a client's own strengths and resources. The focus on life after the residential home appeared to be emphasized by several of the staff members. It was frequently expressed how they tried to prepare the youth for upcoming challenges. One of them mentioned this as an important part of their work at the residential home:

It is important to have procedures for the moving out process. Prepare them as best as possible.

(Informant 1, residential home)

This was further emphasized by another informant, as she expressed how they tried to exercise their role to the best of their ability, despite potential disagreements with the situation:

Simultaneously, it is not always that they want to live with their family when they arrive. Then we try to prepare them as best as we can.

(Informant 2, residential home)

The emphasis on preparing the youth seemed to focus on providing a stable transition for them. As the professionals seemed to recognize their limited influence on the process, they appeared to target their effort in a pragmatic way. Rønnestad & Stolanowski (1997) argue how it is an important part of professional development to be conscious about the complex nature of one's practice. Røkenes & Hanssen (2012) further underline that it is a necessary element of professional practice to deal with a complex and ambiguous reality. One informants at social services mentioned how the residential home had an important role in facilitating a realistic transition for the youth:

I think that [it is important] to prepare the child a lot. (…) And maybe talk to those working at the residential homes, so they don't glorify the image of mom and dad coming. That they have a realistic point of view. So I think it is a lot about that conversation.

(Informant 8, social services)

It appeared in fact like the professionals recognized their responsibility within a structured perspective of the process. While they sometimes expressed frustration over the insufficient influence they had on the process, it seemed like they tried to devote their effort as much as

their role allowed. For example, another informant mentioned how she used her role to facilitate connections within the system that ensured a continued contact with the youth:

> (…) the child often gets the parental responsibility for the family. So in those cases I have assigned the Trustee, their mission ends when the family arrives, but in many cases I have assigned them as contact persons so they can support the child. And in that way, I can keep contact and follow up on how things are with them.
> (Informant 7, social services)

This suggests how professional power sometimes can be the necessary means to address specific situations within a rigid system. As this social worker illustrates it allows her to continue her involvement without being too intrusive. While acknowledging her limited responsibility she simultaneously tries to facilitate a continued support for the youth. This shows how a professional role may become bridging ties for the youths, ensuring access to relevant network support (Ryan et al., 2008). It appeared to be a common focus among the professionals to use their role in a way that would benefit the youth in the long run.

One of the youths described how he was much happier with his current situation as he was living with his father rather than at the residential home. He expressed, however, that he had received a good deal of support while he was living there:

> Usually when I lived in the residential home they helped me with all sorts of things, getting cards and when I have lesson problems, I tell them and they help me. I get all the type of help when I was there.
> (Informant 10, youth)

What he illustrates indicates that his time at the residential home provided him with a lot of practical support. As he was asked if he had the same kind of help now, the youth expressed that he did not feel he needed the same amount of help anymore. Although he mentioned that he had access to support through his school, it appeared like he had adapted to an independent situation:

> Now I am acustomed myself, I am used to things, I understand things, so I do most of the things myself. And when it comes to my lesson, I have the teachers, I have people there, so it is only to ask.
> (Informant 10, youth)

This demonstrates how continued involvement may not always be necessary and that empowering the youth enhances their ability to manage their own situation. It still seems like the youth appreciates the possibility of accessing support, as he described the available help he had through his school:

> The school, there is an office, if you need help you can just ask there. Also you can ask your old teacher. He can answer things. But there's an office and you can ask there, and they can help you.

(Informant 10, youth)

While acknowledging that professional involvement may not always be necessary it shows how the access to support still remains relevant. It illustrates how accessing professional support may provide beneficial resources which can promote autonomy. The knowledge this youth had developed through his time at the residential home seems to have been sufficient for his current situation. Although he expressed satisfaction over the resources he had available in his network, it appeared like the need for emotional bonds was of greater influence to his situation. When asked about the difference between his life at the residential home and his current situation, the youth pointed out how he was much happier now:

> It is a big difference, I am much happier here with my father than I was at the residential home.
> (Informant 10, youth)

He was further asked what this difference entailed, to which he replied:

> Life. The difference is life.
> (Informant 10, youth)

The youth followed up by emphasizing the feeling of living a normal life in contrast to what he experienced at the residential home:

> Because to live in the residential home, and to live with your father is a big difference. There you have different types of characters, different types of people, noisy people. And here we have a quiet life, normal life with my father. So that is what I say is different of life.
> (Informant 10, youth)

5.4.2 Personally motivated support

The second category identified of the professionals' support, I could link to the exceeding role characteristic. This demonstrates how they sometimes step outside their professional role in their involvement with the youth. As the professionals were asked to talk about what they perceived to be their most important contribution, various factors were emphasized. However, several of them mentioned how their close involvement with the youth enabled them to address specific needs. They expressed how these established connections gave them a different perspective than professional responsibility normally entailed. One staff member at a residential home described how she felt their contact with the youth put them in a beneficial position to provide support:

> But I can also feel that it is us at the residential home that has the best contact and relationship with the youth, so often I see that it is good that we join in on those meetings and are involved.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

This indicates that emotional bonds are considered as an important resource while engaging with the youths. It seemingly implies that developing these kind of bonds is an essential part of their practice. This is underpinned by theoretical perspectives emphasizing the relevance of establishing a good relationship with clients (Levin 2004; Røkenes & Hanssen 2012). The relationship is ultimately what puts professionals in a position of supporting the people they engage with. Kokkin (2005) argues furthermore that emotional involvement of social workers is an important element in establishing such relationships. This professional thus points to a valuable factor while emphasizing the importance of their close contact with the youth. The same informant further pointed out how small efforts like making a phone call was an important help they could offer:

> You do not fill in any paper work or anything, you can't even help with that, but this [making a phone call] is something I can feel is no work, but for them it is really good to have this kind of help.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

This kind of contribution appears to be motivated by a desire to simplify the youth's situation. While their professional role may not involve a specific engagement in external processes like applying for family reunification, there still seems to exist an emphasis on demonstrating commitment to the youth. This is consistent with research suggesting that practical help and demonstrating commitment to youth helps ensure that youths are seen and met by the professional (Eide & Eide, 2004). The staff member further expressed how this made her contribution feel meaningful:

> And then I think, of course we should help because it's not much work for us. (…) And then it also feels like one has been an important adult person for this youth.
> (Informant 5, trustee)

The emotional reward of providing support seems again to be what encourages the engagement to the youth's situation. In fact, it was frequently expressed how the emotional bond established with the youth motivated them to provide support beyond their responsibility. Correspondingly, literature shows how emotional bonds established with a client can lead the professional to become a significant other (Kokkin 2004). The extent to which they involved appeared to be motivated by the experience of being meaningful for the youth. It was further expressed by many professionals how their close involvement enhanced a sense of commitment to the youth. One of the trustees mentioned how the close involvement she had made her more reluctant to end her professional role:

> We have been a part of this journey, from they applied for asylum, through all these weird things, so of course we matter a lot. So I never hurry this process [of ending the role]. Normally I tend to push the authorities, but in this case it can take the time it takes.
> (Informant 6, trustee)

The motivation for not ending the contact with the youth appears to relate to the closeness she had developed through her professional engagement. As she points out, it is the sense of meaningful involvement that keeps her from restricting a continued relationship.

The emotional bond developed with the youth was also emphasized by other professionals. For example, the staff member who emphasized their close connections with the youths also described how she found it difficult to all of a sudden end the relationship:

> One can't just end [the relationship], at least I can't, because I also have an emotional bond with them.
> (Informant 3, residential home)

Also here it seems like the emotional bond developed through her professional engagement makes it challenging to end the contact with the youth. It indicates how the restrictions attached to a professional role not always reflect the emotional factors involved. This again shows how professionals may become a significant other for the youth, due to the emotional bonds they establish. Shulman (2008) points out how separation from a significant other may create ambivalent and complex emotions. Similarly, previous research has illustrated that emotional involvement is a disputed matter among professionals due to the risk of becoming too attached (Söderqvist et al., 2015). This raises relevant questions as to how involved professionals should be, and whether such involvement ultimately benefits the youths.

It was described by some informants how they often stayed in touch with the youths despite ending their professional role. One of them mentioned that they did not have any formal routines for continuing the contact, although she normally did so anyway:

> In the cases I have been involved with, I have stayed in contact with the youths, but there are no formal routines for this.
> (Informant 2, residential home)

This suggests that it exists a request for continued contact more than what administrative protocols recognize. It seems like the access to this is promoted by personal engagement rather than formal procedures. One of the trustees pointed out how it normally was the youth who took the initiative to stay in touch:

> (…) it is normally the child that contacts me and wants to stay in touch. (…) So that's the fun part, that they want us to stay in touch.
> (Informant 6, trustee)

While she seems to appreciate this initiative, it still points out how the youth must take an active role in order to continue the relationship. This may generate an asymmetric relationship where the youth's engagement determines his access to further support. The relationship with the professionals was also a focus when interviewing the youth. When asked about his contact with the personnel, the youth mentioned how he still kept in touch with some of them. It was

expressed that he still had a good contact with those at the residential home, although his available time determined the extent to which he stayed in touch:

> Yes, it is good. I have contact with them. But not all the time. When I have time I contact.
> (Informant 9, youth)

The youth was further asked if he would have liked to have more contact with the personnel. He expressed a positive attitude towards this while again mentioning that his time sometimes did not allow it:

> Yes, but I want to have contact with them but I have no time. But sometimes when I have time then I go and say hello. Call the residential home and ask who's working today.
> (Informant 9, youth)

It appears that his active role in maintaining contact becomes decisive for whether or not this happens. Although the professional seem to show interest in him it nevertheless illustrates that his active role becomes a condition for a continued relationship. As he points out, it is not always he has the time to make this effort. As such, it demonstrates how his active role is an unstable condition for this contact. It may also seem like specific personnel is a relevant factor when he contacts the residential home. While asked if there were any personnel he had more contact with, he described that there was 3 people he a good relationship with:

> I have 3 personnel who I… They are nice. We have contact. I have their number. They have called me sometimes and I call, to talk to each other. [What do you talk about?] They ask about how things are with my family, how is school, what have you done today…
> (Informant 9, youth)

The relationship he describes with these professionals indicates that commitment and interest are valuable sources while establishing continued connections. It was further emphasized by the youth how the professionals showed interest in him. He moreover mentioned that he felt they could understand each other:

> They were interested in me. Therefore, we talk a lot and we laugh together and I show them pictures from when I was little. So we understand each other.
> (Informant 9, youth)

6. Concluding discussions

My interest for the topic of family reunification came out of two main aspects. First, I have recently experienced a request from the field for more knowledge about how to ensure positive reunification processes. Second, the increasing amount of unaccompanied minors suggests that it will remain a relevant area of practice in the years to come.

The current situation regarding this population have also been dominating media and political debates. The increase of arrivals has been accompanied by concerns as to how this will influence the quality of reception and future integration. Specific attention has been granted for the impact the current situation has for the support system (SVT, January 2016). It has moreover been debated how the gender imbalance among unaccompanied minors will influence Swedish society (Göteborgs-Posten, January 2016; Politico, January 2016; Expressen, November 2015). Both of these aspects demonstrates relevant issues but they also point out the valuable role of family belonging in regards to sustainable care and social control.

The above factors eventually led to an interest in how family reunification may ensure a positive response to potential challenges. While national research in has tended to focus on the well being and reception of unaccompanied minors, less attention seems to have been granted for the prospect of family reunification. This may be due to the fact that many unaccompanied minors do not have contact with their family. It is still recognized that family bonds in many cases do exists and it is thus noteworthy if this is less emphasized in research.

The aim of my study has therefore been to target the conditions for a positive family reunification. Essential for this understanding has been to explore current practice and how it is experienced by those closest involved. In order to ensure a better framework for developing this area of work I have had a focus on identifying both obstacles and potential of current practice. Accordingly, my study has explored these aspects through the experiences shared by both professionals and youths whom all have been involved in the process.

The first research question focuses on the influence family reunification has for the youths' situation. One of the findings indicates that family reunification tends to leave a good deal of responsibility on the youths. In combination, the amount of individualized support for the youth appears to be diminished. This suggests that reunification entails a transition of care responsibility which may not take into account the specific situation the family is in. The support provided for the youths while being under public care is ensured through a system with sufficient knowledge about society and culture. This enable an access to the kind of support found within social networks (Schaefer et al., in Oakley, 1992). As the family is likely to have less access to such resources it may not ensure a stable transition process, which has been emphasized as an important element when leaving public care (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2014; Wade, 2011; Ward, 2001).

Finding ways to address this is a relevant task for the social work field. For example, enabling a support for the family that could reduce the youths' responsibility would be a natural priority. Although similar means of support already exist, the findings of this study shows that it might be necessary to make the support more available than it currently is. Also, it points to the relevance for additional research focusing on youths' care giving responsibilities during reunification processes.

Another finding suggests that the period between separation and reunification may impose challenges. This is consistent with previous research illustrating the class and cultural gap that might have been developed between the youths and their parents (Barnert et al., 2015). It was expressed by some informants how they perceived the family's cultural background as a potential obstacle for a positive reunification. Although cultural differences may be addressed (Kagiticibasi, 2004; Barnert et al., 2015) it still requires mutual focus while preparing for them.

Therefore, what appears to be more significant is how the professionals struggled to address this aspect despite being aware of it. They described how they found it difficult to prepare the youths for potential challenges because of their strong desire and focus of getting their family here. As preparation and planning are important aspects of ensuring stable transitions, this aspect might challenge the professionals' ability of doing so (Wade, 2011). This indicates that a continued area of focus must be to ensure realistic expectations among the youths. Simultaneously, it argues for a necessity of institutionalizing a support for the youths and their families that they could benefit from during the time after reunification.

The second research question focused on how professionals reflect upon their own practice, which resulted in three main characterizations of their role: insufficient, restrictive and exceeding. The two first illustrated how their role was restricted by external factors and professional mandate. The latter characteristic demonstrated how they at times stepped outside their professional role to provide additional support. It was particularly expressed during the interviews that the restrictiveness attached to their role was not reflected in the expectations they met. It was further illustrated how their organizational belonging and commitment to the youth at times created contrasting expectations. This is in many ways consistent with the challenging balance of the social work field as it is positioned in between a practice of human solidarity and social governance (Levin, 2004).

The flexibility of exceeding their professional role demonstrates a potential for them to address specific needs that are not covered through institutionalized support. Based on what the professionals shared, it appeared to exist a need for such flexibility, which again is coherent with recommendations from previous research (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2014; Barnert et al., 2015; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015). It was thus more significant how the motivation for exceeding their role seemed to rely on the established relationship they had established with the youth. While this is of great potential for those youths who do develop close ties with the professionals it does not address those who for some reason do not. This uncovers another area for improvement in creating a more stable access to continued support, which is not dependent on quality of relationships.

The final research question asked what kind of support professionals provided during the process of family reunification. While they talked about their own contribution it became apparent how this was closely linked to the previous role characteristics. This further distinguished two kinds of support: professional motivated and personal motivated. The first kind of support was determined by their assigned mandate and it illustrates the potential that lies within a professional role. The professionals expressed how empowering and pragmatic approaches were valuable in their practice. This corresponds with the complex nature of social work and the sustainable responsibility emphasized by the professionals (Rønnestad & Stolanowski, 1997; Røkenes & Hanssen, 2012).

The experience shared by one of the youths further illustrates how professional motivated support sometimes might be sufficient. He expressed how the aspect of having a normal life with his family was important for his current situation. This shows how professional involvement may not ensure the same emotional stability as family belonging does. Similarly, previous research has illustrated how stability and a sense of having a 'normal' life is associated with the existence of home (Sirriyeh, 2008).

The latter kind of support emphasize how emotional involvement is a common factor in human related practice. The professionals expressed that it was their close connections with the youths that encouraged them to provide additional support. The emotional value of such involvement was further pointed out as important. This compliments existing literature underlining the potential of demonstrating commitment and emotional involvement (Eide & Eide, 2004; Kokkin, 2005). However, it also points to the risk of establishing a relationship that may not be lasting (Shulman, 2008; Söderqvist et al. 2015). It moreover requires an involvement that might not be reasonable nor ethical to expect from professionals.

The experience from the other youth indicates that further support may benefit the transition of leaving public care, coherent with arguments from earlier research (Söderqvist et al. 2015, Ward, 2001). It was still illustrated how the relationship with the professionals remained a condition for continued contact, which again points to the relevance of institutionalizing such access rather than depending on relational factors. One example of support could be to extend the current transition period of 30 days, based on individual assessments of youths' situation.

As the initial motivation for my study was to explore the conditions for a positive family reunification it remains apparent how complex this picture is. What started as an interest of how the reunification process influence the youths also turned into a focus on the influence of professional relationships. I recognized how the period ahead of reunification appears to have such an influence on the period after. This has stimulated an interest in further research focusing on professional relations in the field of social work. The findings of this study illustrates just how influential this aspect of practice might be. In a later research project, it would be interesting to focus on professional's attitudes towards the relational aspect of their work. A more extensive study would also open up for a greater range of participants, including a higher participation of youths. Although literature already have recognized the challenging nature of professional relations it remains a task for future research to find ways to address this complexity.

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Appendx 1 Information sheet

Intervjuer – Familiegjenforening for ensamkommende barn

Tema for intervjuene (ustrukturert, derav kan andre tema bli tatt opp):

  a) Hvordan ser profesjonelle på sin egen rolle i prosessen med familiegjenforening?

  b) Hva tenker profesjonelle er viktig kunnskap, ferdigheter, fokus etc. i arbeidet med familiegjenforening?

  c) Hvilke praktiske erfaringer har profesjonelle i forhold til prosessen med familiegjenforening?

Gjennomføring av intervju og bruk av resultat:

  o 30-45 minutt
  o Intevjuene blir tatt opp på bånd.
  o Opptak blir transkribert og et utvalg av dataen vil bli brukt til å analyse og diskusjon i masteroppgaven.
  o Transkriptene vil bare være tilgjengelig for student og eksaminator.
  o Alle deltakere vil bli anonymisert, men profesjonell rolle vil bli beskrevet.
  o Oppgaven vil være offentlig tilgjengelig i etterkant.
  o Deltakere vil få tilsendt oppgave via mail, om ønskelig.
  o Deltakere kan trekke seg når som helst.

Spørsmål/uklarhter om oppgaven kan rettes til

Ole Henrik Kråkenes (student)

guskrakol@student.gu.se

Charlotte Melander (veileder)

charlotte.melander@socwork.gu.se

Appendix 2 Information sheet English version

Interviews – Family reunification for unaccompanied minors

Themes for the interviews (unstructured, other themes may therefore emerge):

a) How do professionals consider their own role in the process of family reunification?

b) What do professionals think is important knowledge, focus et. in the work with family reunification?

c) What practical experience do professional have in relation to the process of family reunification?

Procedure of the interview and the uses of the results:

o 30-45 minutes
o Interviews will be recorded.
o Recordings will be transcribed and a selection of the data will be used for analysis and discussion in the master thesis.
o The transcripts will only be available for the student and the examinator.
o All participants will be anonymous, although professional role will be described.
o The thesis will be available publicly accessible after
o All participants will receive the thesis by email, if desirable.
o The participants may withdraw at any point.

Questions/uncertainties may be address to

Ole Henrik Kråkenes (student)

guskrakol@student.gu.se

Charlotte Melander (supervisor)

charlotte.melander@socwork.gu.se

Appendix 3 Interview guide professionals

Intervjuguide
Takk for deltakelsen. Målet med disse intervjuene er å läre mer om hvordan arbeidet med familieåterförening ser ut i praksis. Er det spörsmål du ikke forstår eller synes er uklare kan du be meg forklare annerledes. Jeg er ikke ute etter spesifikke svar, bare dine erfaringer og refleksjoner.

Før vi starter har jeg bare noen enkle spörsmål:

1. Hva er din utbildningsbakgrunn?
2. Hvor mange saker angående familieåterförening har du värt involvert i?
3. Hvor lenge har du arbeidet med ensamkommande barn?

a) Hvordan ser profesjonelle på sin egen rolle i prosessen med familiegjenforening?

Rolle för familieåterförening:

o Deltar du i arbeidet med å re-etablere kontakt med barnets familie?
o Har du noen rolle i det praktiske arbeidet med å søke om familiegjenforening?
o Hvordan forberedes barnet på familiens ankomst?

Etter familieåterförening:

o Hvordan endrer din rolle seg når familien er ankomt?
o Deltar du i noen av mötene mellom familien og barnet?
o Holder du kontakt med barnet etter familieåterförening?

b) Hva tenker profesjonelle er viktig kunnskap, ferdigheter, fokus etc. i arbeidet med familiegjenforening?
o Hva tenker du er det viktigste bidraget personal kan komme med i forkant av familieåterförening? Hvilke ferdigheter er viktig?
o Hvor involvert mener du personal bör väre etter at familien er ankomt? Hva er positivt/negativt med slik involvering?
o Viss du kunne velge et område som du selv kunne forbedret deg på, hva ville det vært?

c) Hvilke praktiske erfaringer har profesjonelle i forhold til prosessen med familiegjenforening?
o Hva mener du er mest utfordrende å forholde seg til i arbeidet med familieåterförening?
o Viss du kunne endre et eller flere områder, hva ville det vært?

o Hvordan opplever du samarbeid med andre involverte aktörer? Hvor ofte er du i kontakt med disse?

Til slutt: Hvorfor mener du familieåterförening er viktig/utfordrende for barnet?

Appendix 4 Interview guide professionals English version

Interview guide English version

Thank you for participating. The aim of these interviews is to learn more about how the work with family reunification is experienced in practice. If there are questions you don't understand or you think are unclear it is possible to ask me to explain differently. I am not looking for any specific answers, just your experiences and reflections.
Before we start I have some basic question:

1. What is your education?
2. How many cases of family reunification have you been involved with?
3. How long have you been working with unaccompanied minors?

a) **How do professionals perceive their own role in the process of family reunification?**

   Role before family reunification:

o Do you participate in any of the work of re-establishing contact with the child's family?
o Do you take any part in the practical work of applying for family reunification?
o How is the child prepared for the family's arrival?

   After family reunification:

o How does your role change after the family arrives?
o Do you take part in any of the meetings with the family?
o Do you stay in touch with the child after family reunification?

b) **What does professionals think is important knowledge, skills, focus etc. in the work of family reunification?**
o What do you think is the most important contribution professional can make before family reunification?
o How involved do you think professionals should be after the family arrives? What is positive/negative with such involvement?
o If you could choose one area you could improve your own work, what would that be?

c) **What practical experiences do professionals have with the process of family reunification?**
o   What do you think is most challenge to relate to in the work with family reunification?
o   If you could change one or more areas, what would that be?
o   How do you experience the cooperation with other involved actors? How often are you in contact with these?

Finally: Why do you think family reunification is important/challenge for the child?

Appendix 5 Interview guide youths

1. Hvordan var livet ditt i Sverige før familien din kom?
o   Boende
o   Fritid
o   Skole
o   Støtte

2. Hvordan har livet ditt vært etter at familien din kom?
o   Fritid
o   Skole
o   Støtte

Mulige spm:

o   Hva er den største skilnaden?
o   Hva er det beste med å ha sin familie her?
o   Hva gjør du på fritiden?
o   Hur er skolan?
o   Har du kontakt med personal från boende?
o   Hvem frågar du om du behøver hjelp til ting?

Appendix 6 Interview guide youths English version

1. How was your life in Sweden before your family arrived?
o Residential home
o Leisure time
o School
o Support

2. How has your life been after your family arrived?
o Leisure time
o School
o Support

Possible questions:

o What is the biggest difference?
o What is the best part about having your family here?
o What do you do on you spare time?
o How is school?
o Do you stay in touch with any personnel from the residential home?
o Who do you ask if you need help with anything?