



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Department of Social Work

Undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden:  
everyday life and expectations

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Master's Programme in Social Work and Human Rights

Degree Report 30 higher education credits

Spring 2013

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## **Abstract**

Title: Undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden: everyday life and expectations

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Key words: undocumented children, undocumented young adults, child rights perspective, everyday life, symbolic interactionism, interpreter -aided research

This research elicits how undocumented children and young adults construct and experience their everyday life in Gothenburg, Sweden. The construction or lack of construction of a future depending on a non citizenship is analyzed and considered to be the point of departure for other researchers willing to imbue themselves in the erection of intercultural societies where undocumented migrants' rights can be guaranteed and respected.

The research makes a journey through the most relevant English written literature regarding undocumented children's rights and life conditions in a structural perspective. Precise laws that protect undocumented children in Sweden are addressed.

Finally, conducting unstructured research interviews with four participants a passage through their everyday lives is depicted and analyzed under a rights perspective and using symbolic interactionism as background theory while considering them as active social agents.

## Acknowledgements

First of all I want to thank the four participants of this research. Without your interesting stories and the amenable time you were willing to share with me none of this would be possible. This document belongs to you.

I also need to thank the two most important persons in my life. Sergio and Bacaanda have been the bravest persons in my world while dealing with my ups and downs while writing this thesis and coping with my stressful evenings. *Los amo y son la razón que me hace sonreír cada día.*

Finally, I want to thank my family, all my classmates and teachers for their support during that two years journey in Gothenburg. Monica, I am giving you this thesis one year later but I am sure the delay was worthwhile.

*“It is one thing to turn up in a new country in all the pomp and circumstance of a great big boat, heavily armed, and laden down with good things to eat and trade. It is quite a different thing, as poor refugees throughout history will tell you, to turn up practically naked, unarmed, defenceless and with nothing in your arms” Cressida Cowell, How to Ride a Dragon’s Storm*

## Table of contents

### Chapter 1

Introduction.....	7
Objectives.....	7
Research questions.....	7
Definition of concepts.....	8
Am I an undocumented migrant?.....	8
Am I an undocumented child?.....	9
General context.....	10
Undocumented migrants in numbers.....	10
Constructing undocumented children as vulnerable.....	12
As an undocumented child in Sweden, which laws protect me?.....	13
International legal framework: the United Nations' instruments.....	13
National legal framework: Law Concerning Health Care for Asylum Seekers and Others .....	16
Previous research.....	19
Access to economic, social and cultural rights of undocumented migrants in Sweden.....	20
Undocumented migrants: citizens /non-citizens of Sweden.....	24
Undocumented children in Europe and Sweden.....	26

### Chapter 2- Theoretical framework

Children as social agents.....	34
Interpretative Reproduction .....	35
Symbolic interactionism.....	36

## Chapter 3 - Methodology

Induction and Deduction.....	37
Phenomenology.....	38
Unstructured research interview.....	40
Sample definition.....	41
Validity and trustworthiness.....	43
Ethical considerations.....	44
Informed consent.....	45
Children’s risks in participating .....	47
Interpreters as intermediaries.....	47
Parent’s presence.....	50
Anonymity.....	50
Children at risk.....	52
Analysis.....	53
Profile of the participants.....	53
Technical considerations.....	54

## Chapter 4 – Results and Analysis of Interview Data

Results and Analysis.....	57
Migratory Status.....	57
Personal identity.....	58
Everyday life.....	60
Feelings: fear and resentment towards the failed asylum process.....	60
School.....	62
Housing arrangements.....	65
Interpersonal relationships.....	69

Accessibility to health care.....	75
Informal work.....	76
Spatiality in Gothenburg.....	77
Conclusions regarding how is the everyday life of undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden constructed and experienced.....	80
Desire of Change.....	84
Future expectations.....	85
Chapter 5- Conclusions.....	88
Appendix – Interview guide.....	91
Bibliography.....	93

## Chapter 1

### **Introduction**

This is a story about how two children and two young persons live their childhood, teenage years or young adulthood in Gothenburg, Sweden as minors or young adults without proper documents to reside in the country. In this research I try to rescue the most relevant ideas that had been phrased in English regarding the situation of undocumented migrants and children in specific in Sweden.

I had great expectations regarding this research and some of them were not feasible, but what is presented here is done with complete security that comes from the participants and that their right to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings was always respected and is the backbone of this research.

The theories that support the fieldwork are symbolic interactionism, interpretative reproduction and the sociology of childhood that considers children as social agents. In the methodology, both inductivity and deductivity are employed under a phenomenological perspective. An extensive chapter regarding results and analysis is included with the objective of hearing directly the voices of the real experts, the children and young adults protagonists of the research.

### **Objectives**

The general objective of this research is to hear, make visible, describe and analyze the everyday life and future expectations of undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden from their own perspective. The specific objectives are:

- Conduct research with children and young adults recognized as social agents.
- Perform research with children under a children's rights perspective.

### **Research questions**

The overall objective of the research will be tackled by addressing the following questions:

1. How is the everyday life of undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden constructed and experienced?

2. Which aspects of their everyday life, and why, would they like to be different in order to have their children's rights respected?
3. What are the future expectations of undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden?

### **Definition of concepts**

In order to have a clearer idea of who are the storytellers of this story let us define what is conceived as undocumented migrant and specifically what an undocumented child is.

#### **Am I an undocumented migrant?**

The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants<sup>1</sup> (PICUM) defines undocumented migrants as persons who reside in a country without having a residence permit that allows them to do so. In this sense, this platform has classified undocumented migrants in two categories:

- (i) People whose arrival in the country of destination has been by a legal route, but who have subsequently found that the substantial cost of their movement cannot be recovered through the very limited work opportunities permitted under the official schemes;
- (ii) People who, though gaining admission by irregular routes, had been led to that point after a long-drawn out process involving a substantial commitment in time and scarce financial resources, but who had not at the onset of their journey necessarily intended 'illegal' migration (PICUM 2007:5).

In the second category we can recognize the asylum seekers whose application has been rejected; persons that are estimated to be the majority of undocumented migrants residing in Sweden.

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<sup>1</sup> This platform is a non-governmental organization that promotes the respect of the rights of undocumented migrants in Europe by monitoring and reporting, advocacy, capacity-building, awareness-raising and dialoguing with global actors on international migration (PICUM 2008:2; PICUM 2007:2).



### **Am I an undocumented child?**

According to Westin, in the social construction<sup>2</sup> of a “hidden child” two of the main features that interact are self-perception and the perception of the others. In one hand, the self-perception of the child is not changed instantly while receiving a denial of the asylum application; this means that to perceive himself or herself as “hidden” is a process. On the other hand, what changes is the perception of the other, meaning the adults, towards the child when they realize he or she does not have a legal status anymore. This change of perception transforms the rights adults think the child is now entitled or not entitled to. This modification of perception ultimately alters the social environment of the child. In this sense, the difference of how the child is being treated by the others is what makes the child to change his or her self-image (Westin 2008:39, 42).

In connection, regarding how the others perceive the child, Jacqueline Bhabha, using a metaphor, names undocumented children as Arendt’s children<sup>3</sup>. This denomination includes more than enough the children this study aims to address because Arendt’s children include “...migrant children who have traveled alone across borders, first-generation citizen children whose immigrant parents have been deported, citizen or migrant children living in so-called “mixed status” or “undocumented” families, and unregistered or stateless children living in the country of their birth with their immigrant parents (Bhabha 2009:413)”. The three characteristics that they share are: “...they are minors; they are, or they risk being, separated from their parents or customary guardians; and they do not in fact (regardless of whether they do in law) have a country to call their own because they are either noncitizens or children of noncitizens (Ibidem).” Moreover, whatever the categorization, it is clear that the category where a child might fit is completely “fluid and dynamic” (Ibidem; Westin 2008:10).

For instance, undocumented children in Europe are a diverse group ranging from children who are coming to reunite with their family members although not through the official family reunification program of the given host country; children that enter the host country irregularly

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<sup>2</sup> “Social constructivism refers to the process by which phenomena in the social world are formed and sustained by social structures and interactions rather than being constants that conform to natural laws (Somekh and Lewin 2005: 348).”

<sup>3</sup> In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1966) Hannah Arendt writes about the unenforceability of human rights due to *de facto* or functional stateless (Bhabha 2009:410-412).

accompanied by their relatives and who do not apply for asylum; children born in Europe and whose parents are undocumented; or unaccompanied children either sent by relatives or escaping from their home country who decide not to apply for asylum (PICUM 2008:5).

Specifically for this research, undocumented children in Sweden are minors who lack appropriate documentation for residing in the country. In this sense, for non-EU citizens it means not to have a residence permit; for asylum seekers is not to have a LMA-card<sup>4</sup> and for EU-citizens not to have a proof of right to residence in Sweden or any other Nordic country (Waldehorn 2007:3). This broad conception is what allows that all the previous definitions can be included in the category of “undocumented children in Sweden”. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that from all the children that fit into this definition, “[t]he largest group in Sweden is likely to be “hidden children”; children who have previously sought asylum and gone underground to avoid deportation. But there are also children who have arrived here in order to work in the informal sector or to visit relatives and others who have been brought by traffickers. Some have fled their countries without seeking asylum (Ibidem: 4).”

## **General context**

### **Undocumented migrants in numbers**

In 2009, the United Nations declared that out of the 200 million migrants in the world, 10 to 15 per cent are considered to be undocumented (UN 2009 cited by Ruiz-Casares et al 2009:329). Only one year later, the International Organization for Migration estimated that there were 214 million international migrants, maintaining the same percentage of irregular migrants that the UN had calculated the previous year. Most of them overstayed their visa or residence permit in the host country. How migrants become irregular can be in different manners. Workers can overstay after their work permit or residence permit expired, migrants can enter the host country without authorization, migrants could have been trafficked and persons can even find themselves in irregular situations because of administrative obstacles or lack of information (IOM 2010:29-30).

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<sup>4</sup> The LMA- card is the Asylum Seeker Card issued by Migrationsverket (Swedish Migration Board). The card proves that a person is an asylum seeker and that he or she has the right to stay in Sweden while the decision is being taken ([http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/467\\_en.html](http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/467_en.html) last visited 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2012).

Europe is considered to have 60 million migrants (Lancet 2007 cited by Ruiz-Casares et al. 2009:333). Some researches estimate that between 5 to 8 million are undocumented migrants (Ibidem; GCIM 2005 in PICUM 2007:5, O'Connell and Farrow 2007:29 & PICUM 2008:7). Yet, according to Vogel (2009 cited in Düvell 2010:3) the number of irregular migrants in the European Union is not 5 to 8 million, but between 1.8 to 3.9 in the fifteen major receiving countries. 85 to 90 per cent of these irregular migrants are overstayers, either by being rejected in their asylum application and decided to remain in the country or by taking employment when their visas do not allow them to do so (Düvell 2010:3).

The discrepancy in the calculation of the number of irregular migrants in Europe, between GCIM's and Vogel's estimations, seems to be caused by three main factors that have decreased the condition of irregularity. First, the expansion of the European Union allowed that nationals of newly accepted countries were not considered irregular anymore in the host countries; second, regularization programmes have changed legal status of around 3.3 to 4 million persons; and third, more control in immigration policies, borders and labour market (Ibidem).

While trying to put a number of undocumented migrants in Sweden, estimates range widely. In 2007, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health expressed that there are approximately 15,000 undocumented persons living in Sweden. Most of them are rejected asylum seekers and some never claimed asylum but overstayed in the country (Hunt 2007:§70). According to an organization created by undocumented persons in Sweden called '*dennaonsdag*' (this Wednesday), there are between 25,000 and 30, 000 undocumented migrants in Sweden including previous asylum seekers, who constitute an important proportion of them (Holmgren 2008 cited by Westin 2008:19). Recent research demonstrates that the number could have increased somewhere between 15, 000 and 100,000 (Alexander 2010:216).

Whatever the number is, the mere estimation is controversial but the idea that most of them are rejected asylum seekers prevails. For instance, Baghir-Zada stated in 2007 that there are no official numbers of undocumented migrants in Sweden. Nonetheless, perhaps most of them are

rejected asylum seekers, whilst some other categories belong to people that overstayed once their residence permits expired, persons that entered the country without presenting themselves to any border or migratory authority and children born in Sweden of parents with irregular status (Baghir-Zada 2007:76). In 2010 the same researcher, while expressing that the number of irregular migrants in Sweden is unknown since no quantitative estimations have been made so far, mentions a possible population between 10,000 and 20,000 with irregular legal status; reaffirming that most of them are former asylum seekers (Baghir-Zada 2010:294). In a similar path, Vogel (2009 cited in Düvell 2010:6) estimates there are between 8,000 and 12,000 irregular migrants in Sweden.

From the total of undocumented migrants in Europe, there exist no reliable numbers of how many could be children (PICUM 2008:7). However, it is documented that in northern Europe most undocumented children are part of refugee families whose application for asylum has been denied (Hjern & Jeppsson 2005:125). In the case of Sweden, Westin estimates that "...approximately 1,000 – 1,500 undocumented children live "submerged" in Sweden today and as many again are in the risk zone – they are undocumented but live in the open (Westin 2008:20)."

At the end, to pursue to know the exact number of undocumented children can become a control mechanism. This study that tells the story of only four children and young adults is not trying to prove that undocumented children are worthwhile to be part of investigations because of their prevalence in the Swedish society. It tries to prove that they are worthwhile because they have an intrinsic value as human beings and the importance is not about "how big the problem is" but to facilitate them in the exercise of their voice and agency in their journey, while Sweden responds to their children's rights according to the guidelines of international human rights law.

### **Constructing undocumented children as vulnerable**

Part of the objectives of this research is to recognize children as social agents and to conduct this study under their perspectives in order to achieve a child-rights based interaction. With this in mind it is of overall importance to address the fact that undocumented migrant children are not intrinsically vulnerable because of any of the three conditions (to be *children*, *migrant* or

*undocumented*), but that this vulnerability is socially and politically constructed and that is how it is perceived in this research.

At first glance, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants presents a triple vulnerability of undocumented children: to be children, to be migrants and to be undocumented migrant (PICUM 2008:6). Nevertheless, it can be proven that each of these characteristics that depict undocumented children as vulnerable is both socially and politically constructed. First, in the definition of childhood, governments in the European Union play an important role in constructing the condition of being or not a child by using age assessments that have been proven to have a margin of error up to 5 years in both directions(Fekete 2007:99).

In regard to the second characteristic, to be migrant, this construction of the vulnerability of undocumented children is enhanced by migrant receiving countries implementing more restrictive policies towards migration that have as consequence the escalation of irregular migration (O’Connel & Farrow 2007:27); in addition “...the rights violations that child migrants experience are not the inevitable consequence of migration. They rather reflect a lack of political will to protect the rights of those who move and a prioritising of immigration control over the protection of migrant children’s rights (Ibidem: 10).”

Finally, as consequence, the migration policies that care more about national security, construct the vulnerability of migrant children by categorizing their entrance as illegal while leaving the respect of children’s rights as a secondary priority (PICUM 2008:8). Even when legality is not a guarantee of security and protection, “...being politically constructed as “illegal” makes it much harder to access services, justice and social protection...” (O’Connell & Farrow 2007:11).”

### **As an undocumented child in Sweden, which laws protect me?**

#### **International legal framework: the United Nations’ instruments**

Since its foundation, the United Nations has created and opened to signature and ratification several human rights instruments recognized by States Parties as international law applicable in their own borders. A number of these human rights instruments protect undocumented children in the State Parties that have ratified each particular convention. In the following section it will be

explained which international instruments are applicable to undocumented children in Sweden and how, because Sweden has ratified all of them, the country is legally binded to respect the rights proclaimed in them.

- ❖ Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 26 recognizes right to education to everyone (PICUM 2008:12). Article 25 states the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate for his or her health and well-being and this includes food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services. It highlights motherhood and childhood as entitled to special care and assistance (Ibidem: 46, 72; UDHR).
  
- ❖ International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>5</sup>: Article 12 recognizes the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. In addition, the General Comment 14 (in 2000) of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reads that State Parties must *respect, protect and fulfill* the human right to health by assuring four standards: *availability, accessibility, acceptability* and *quality* (Alexander 2010:218-219; PICUM 2007:6). Moreover, in its General Comment 20 *Non-Discrimination in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (in 2009) asserts that “all children within a State, including those with an undocumented status . . . non-nationals, such as refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, migrant workers and victims of international trafficking, regardless of legal status and documentation” are entitled to economic, social and cultural rights, which include affordable health care (Ibidem: 222).

Articles 13 and 14 address the right of everyone to education. In addition, the 8<sup>th</sup> of December of 1999 the Committee confirmed that the principle of non-discrimination stated in Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child “extends to all persons of school age residing in the territory of a State party, including non-nationals, and irrespective of their legal status (CESCR 1999 quoted by PICUM 2008: 13)”

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<sup>5</sup> Entered into force in Sweden the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January of 1976 (United Nations Treaty Collection <http://treaties.un.org/Pages/UNTSONline.aspx?id=3> accessed April 12<sup>th</sup> 2012).

Article 11 recognizes "... the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions (ICESCR)."

- ❖ Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>6</sup>: Articles 28 and 29 recognize the right of the child to education on the basis of equal opportunity and explain how education shall be directed (PICUM 2008:12). Moreover, the Committee on Rights of the Child in its General Comment No.6 affirms that "the right to education must be guaranteed comprehensively and without any distinction between undocumented children and children whose residence is authorized (Ibidem: 13)."

Article 24 recognizes the right of the child of the highest attainable standard of health and mentions States Parties shall ensure no child is deprived to his or her right to access health care services (Ibidem: 47). In addition to health and very relevant for undocumented children who have experiences of war or public unrest before arriving to Sweden, Article 39 states that appropriate measures shall be taken

to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child (CRC Art. 39).

Article 27 recognizes "the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (CRC)."

- ❖ International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination<sup>7</sup>: Article 5 guarantees the right of everyone to economic, social and cultural rights such as right to housing; right to public health, medical care, social security and social services;

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<sup>6</sup> Entered into force in Sweden the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September of 1990 (United Nations Treaty Collection <http://treaties.un.org/Pages/UNTSONline.aspx?id=3> accessed April 12<sup>th</sup> 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Entered into force in Sweden the 4<sup>th</sup> of January of 1969 (United Nations Treaty Collection <http://treaties.un.org/Pages/UNTSONline.aspx?id=3> accessed April 12<sup>th</sup> 2012).

right to education and training and right to equal participation in cultural activities among others (PICUM 2008: 13, 45, 72; ICERD). Furthermore, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in its General Recommendation No. 30 stated “(...) Ensure that States parties respect the right of non-citizens to an adequate standard of physical and mental health by, inter alia, refraining from denying or limiting their access to preventive, curative and palliative health services ...(CERD 2004 quoted by PICUM 2008: 46).”

### **National legal framework: Law Concerning Health Care for Asylum Seekers and Others**

In Sweden, undocumented migrants are excluded from the public health insurance scheme (PICUM 2007: 88; Baghir-Zada 2010:293). This means they have access to health care to strictly under “emergency care”, “immediate care” or “care that can not wait” paying full cost of the service (PICUM 2007: 89; Alexander 2010: 230). This practice makes Sweden belong to the countries that provide health care to undocumented migrants only on a payment basis. On the other side, countries like Italy and Spain provide the widest health coverage to undocumented migrants of EU member states (PICUM 2007:8). The vague definition of “emergency” or “urgent” makes the decision of who is entitled to which type of service fall under the discretion of administrative staff and not under doctors’ decisions taken under medical circumstances (Alexander 2010: 230).

The only exception is for undocumented children who were previous asylum seekers and whose application was rejected. They do have access to free health care services, meaning they are entitled to health and dental care to the same extent as Swedish resident children (PICUM 2007: 8, 88; Alexander 2010: 232; Baghir- Zada 2010: 293). This right is recognized in Swedish legislation in the Law Concerning Health Care for Asylum Seekers and Others, which was passed by the Parliament in May 2008 and entered into force the 1<sup>st</sup> of July of 2008 (Alexander 2010: 224; Baguir-Zada 2010: 295). This right is recognized to all persons under 18 who belong to any of the following groups:

...individuals who have applied for refugee status in Sweden, are being held in custody for possession of invalid papers or failing to possess papers and those currently temporarily residing in Sweden



because they have agreed to cooperate with a criminal investigation [...] asylum seekers when they have been notified of an extradition order. It does not apply to adults who are hidden [BUT] *All foreigners under 18 in each group* are entitled to health care on the same basis as Swedish citizens and residents (Law Concerning Healthcare for Asylum Seekers and Others 2008 cited by Alexander 2010: 226, emphasis added).

Even when by law one category of undocumented migrants, rejected children asylum seekers, is respected the right to the highest attainable standard of health, two practical problems can be identified: to be able to prove the person is under 18 and that he or she is a rejected asylum seeker (Baghir-Zada 2010: 296).

Regarding the rest of undocumented migrants without subsidized health care, since the aforementioned law does not specify if the payment has to be covered before or after the treatment has been received, in case the payment is requested prior to the consultation, persons without the economic fluency to cover the fee might be deterred to even request the service (Ibidem: 296,312). In practice, undocumented migrants have accessed free treatment for some contagious sexually transmitted diseases, although not including HIV-AIDS or tuberculosis (PICUM 2007: 89).

Considering undocumented children, those that never applied for asylum, according to the law are also only entitled to immediate care. Though, in practice according to a questionnaire survey conducted by Läkare Utan Gränser between July and September 2005 with 102 participants in Stockholm (2005:5), all children receive access to full health care (2005 cited in Alexander 2010: 232; PICUM 2007: 91). However, the real access to undocumented children, both previous asylum seekers and children under other categories, to exercise their right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is mostly hindered by the fear of their parents to contact public institutions because of the legal constraints they have (Alexander 2010: 232). This fear of contacting health care services, which also impacts undocumented migrants adult's agency in requesting emergency care for them, is in part exacerbated by not possessing knowledge on Swedish legislation regarding healthcare services. For instance, there lacks knowledge of the Secrecy Act, "...which generally prohibits healthcare professionals from

contacting *inter alia* the police authorities and handing over an illegal alien to them (Baghir-Zada 2010: 309,310).”

In addition, the Secrecy Act entitles individuals “...to privacy concerning information about their residences. [Including] whether someone is residing in Sweden permanently, temporarily or legally (Secrecy Act 1980 cited in Alexander 2010: 224).”

According to Baguir-Zada (2007, 2010), who conducted a four year research regarding undocumented migrant’s access to health care services in Sweden and the Netherlands using qualitative interviews with over ninety participants<sup>8</sup>, the restrictive environment for undocumented migrants to access health care services in Sweden has given rise to parallel options to the public health insurance scheme, such as the *Private Voluntary Healthcare Initiatives* (PVHI).

This means that undocumented migrants in Sweden are accessing health care mainly through underground clinics and health networks (Baghir-Zada 2007:77). The clinics are located in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Malmö, while the health network operates in Stockholm. In fact, the difference between a clinic and a network is that in the former exists a physical space to receive the patients, while in the latter a phone number is provided and the patients are sent directly to the doctors’ offices; this does not exclude the fact that some clinics are functioning as well as networks by referring patients to doctors’ premises (Ibidem; Baghir-Zada 2010: 306).

In the access to parallel health care, the strategies that undocumented migrants create are shaped in great part by their ethnicity, their religion and involvement with NGO’s (Baghir-Zada 2007: 75- 76). Ethnicity is highlighted by the experience of undocumented migrants to receive assistance and information from co-ethnics, from ethnic communities, in the host country (Ibidem: 80). The role that religion plays in undocumented migrants’ coping in Sweden consists in being helped both by persons that share their same religious belief and by religious institutions and persons that do not necessarily share the same religious belief (Ibidem: 81). Finally, how strong the involvement with NGO’s can be is affected by the organization’s financial and human

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<sup>8</sup> This particular ninety participants were only from Sweden’s research and over 40 were undocumented migrants and the rest were persons from immigrant’s associations, NGO’s, religious institutions, professionals providing health care services and police and immigration authorities (Baghir-Zada 2007:75).

capital. Even when NGO's are trying to focus in the whole target group, all undocumented migrants, in practice they need to prioritize according to some characteristics such as the presence of children in the family and urgencies of the migrants (Ibidem: 82).

Even when on the presence of Sweden's failure to "...*respect* the right to health because it has not refrained from denying or limiting equal access for all persons to preventative, curative and palliative care (Alexander 2010: 233)" and it is clear that by refusing to provide legal protection to undocumented children that are not previous asylum seekers the country "...has not fully conformed to its duties to respect the right to health, to provide health care to all children and to act in the best interests of the child (Ibidem: 234.)"; the alternatives that the civil society has created through the PVHI by providing fully subsidized physical and to some extent mental health, can not solve the root problem, meaning they can not change the "...status of illegality, socio-economic status, and the unstable living conditions of their patients (Baghir-Zada 2010: 307)."

### **Previous research**

The methodology employed for the literature review presented in this section is a combination of systematic<sup>9</sup> and narrative<sup>10</sup> reviews. The reason it is a combination is because I neither achieved a completely systematic, neither a completely narrative review under Ebeling and Gibbs's (2008:67) requirements; which led me at the end to combine the techniques. It is not a completely systematic review because not "all relevant research (Ibidem)" could be reviewed since some of the literary production regarding undocumented children in Sweden has been written, for obvious reasons, in Swedish and I lack the ability to read the language. The same condition disabled me to access several primary sources, a condition for a narrative review (Ibidem), for instance reports by public Swedish institutes and some Swedish legislation, but also research by scholars.

The texts revised were chosen for different reasons. Some authors were directly recommended to me by academics knowledgeable in the topic of migration. Other texts were searched in the

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<sup>9</sup> A systematic review "... identifies and synthesizes all relevant research on a specific topic (Ebeling and Gibbs 2008:67)."

<sup>10</sup> A narrative review "... synthesizes and assesses primary research into a single, descriptive account (Ebeling and Gibbs 2008:67)."

databases of NGO's engaged in the literary production of the theme in question, such as Save the Children Sweden and PICUM. In addition, articles were accessed through electronic databases entering keywords such as "undocumented migrants in Sweden" and "undocumented children in Sweden". The word "illegal" was not included in the search because of its negative connotation; neither "hidden refugees" were keywords to use since undocumented migrants are a larger category. Although it includes hidden refugees, it does not constraint its meaning to them. Finally, as I began to do the literature review related references in the texts were searched to expand the panorama. At last, I obtained both primary and secondary sources which provided the context for this study.

The literature review shows that much concern has been focused on the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health of undocumented migrant adults and children both in a European and in the Swedish context<sup>11</sup>. Another set of literature production has been dedicated to the access to economic, social and cultural rights<sup>12</sup> of undocumented migrants (not specifically addressing children, yet mentioning them) in Sweden. A third theme is the exercise of citizenship / *non- citizenship* of undocumented migrants in Sweden. Finally, research was found that concentrates on several aspects of the life of undocumented children in Europe and some that explicitly address the experience of undocumented children in Sweden. With exception of the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, each of the remaining themes will be developed in the following sections.

### **Access to economic, social and cultural rights of undocumented migrants in Sweden**

Khosravi's ethnographic research has brought to the discussion table the *embodied experiences of being 'illegal'*<sup>13</sup> of undocumented migrants (Khosravi 2010: 95). He conducted ethnographic fieldwork, using the techniques of interviews and participant observation of everyday life, in Stockholm for two years between May 2005 and December 2006 with 50 persons<sup>14</sup> (Ibidem: 96-

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<sup>11</sup> Due to the fact that this right is included in Swedish legislation, this topic has already been addressed in the previous section.

<sup>12</sup> These researches include more rights other than the right to health.

<sup>13</sup> Although it is previously stated that I do not use the concept "illegal" for referring to undocumented persons, I respect Khosravi's conceptualization of "embodied experiences of being illegal" and that is why the concept "illegal" is used in this lines while acknowledging previous research conducted by Shahram Khosravi.

<sup>14</sup> From the 50 persons, Khosravi worked more in depth with 33 undocumented migrants. The other participants were Iranian undocumented families; relatives, acquaintances and employers of the participants; volunteers of the clinic of

97). The *embodied experiences of being 'illegal'* include not being able to access fundamental rights such as "...work, housing, healthcare, safety and social or family life [consequently an] increased risk of exploitation, illness, abuse, disrupted family life and ultimately premature death (Ibidem: 96)."

Apparently, the life of an undocumented migrant in Sweden is shaped by two main factors. One is the fear of being apprehended and deported which makes undocumented migrants auto-discipline themselves into complying with regulations such as always trying to pay the tram fare (Ibidem: 99; Holgersson 2010: 110,111). The second one is the employment in formal sector due to being excluded from the formal sector and the welfare system (Khosravi 2010: 99; Gavanas 2010). Anna Gavanas, in her study on formal and informal domestic work sector in Stockholm during the period 2009-2010, conducted thirty interviews with domestic workers, managers of domestic service companies and organizations, unions or agencies<sup>15</sup> revealing living and working conditions of migrant workers in the formal and informal domestic service sector in Stockholm (Gavanas 2010: 9-11). The working conditions in the informal sector often include low wages or no payment, uncertainty of duration of employment, to be lent out to other employers and sexual harassment (Khosravi 2010: 100-102; Gavanas 2010: 20, 26-29, 38, 51-56, 67) .

The access to housing is usually characterized by being sporadic and unstable, condition that primarily affects children "...whose social connections and networks are locally formed" (Khosravi 2010: 104). For instance, while moving from place to place, the house they occupy does not always becomes a home; children lose the friends they had and lose or change school or day care; in extreme conditions "...children have to stay indoors, keep silent and not attract attention" (Hjern & Jeppsson 2005: 125). It can not be denied that these circumstances hinder a "stable basis for everydaylife" (Khosravi 2010: 104).

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Médecins du Monde in Stockholm where he initiated his fieldwork; and lawyers, police and Migration Board staff (Khosravi 2010: 97).

<sup>15</sup> The participants of this research are undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, Swedish citizens, EU citizens, as well as persons with residence permits; from which 11 were workers, 7 managers of domestic service companies and 12 belonged either to organizations, unions or agencies mostly of migrants, paperless migrants and homeless persons. (Gavanas 2010:11, 83-84).

Several researches have emphasized the importance of ethnic networks. In migrant communities, migrants organize themselves to fulfill their requirements of everyday life such as housing, education, access to employment and access to healthcare (Khosravi 2010; Baghir-Zada 2007, 2010; Hjern & Jeppsson 2005: 121-122; Gavanas 2010). Specifically with undocumented migrants, the ethnic networks are fundamental for access to work in the informal sector and housing outside the mainstream housing market (Khosravi 2010: 104; Gavanas 2010).

Finally, something as quotidian as family life, is also affected by being undocumented. In the person's past, not only families could have been separated by or during the migration process. In his or her present, relationships with relatives might get affected by some of the members having residence permits and others being undocumented. Finally, the person's possibility of constructing new personal relationships in the future, such as falling in love, is affected by the condition of being undocumented (Khosravi 2010: 109-110).

A divergent view on the status quo of social rights for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers in Sweden is the research conducted by Andersson and Nilsson. Based on an analysis of Swedish laws regarding migrants, the authors propose that since early 1990's Sweden has increased social rights and right to work to asylum seekers, while the international trend is to reduce the access to these rights as a way to decrease the influx of asylum seekers (Andersson & Nilsson 2009: 167-169). Evidently this right does not include undocumented migrants.

An example that Andersson and Nilsson (2009: 170) provide of more liberal policies is the temporary law regarding residence permits that applied from 15 November 2005 to 31 March 2006. The law targeted persons which their previous application had been rejected and yet they had remained in the country. Out of the more than 31,000 persons that made use of this law, it is considered that more than 8,000 were undocumented migrants. At the end of 2006, when almost all cases had been considered, 42 percent had been granted permanent residence permits and 14 per cent temporary residence permits (Slutrapport 2007: 25 cited by Andersson and Nilsson 2009:170).

Civil society pushed towards the implementation of this temporary law organizing the campaign Refugee Amnesty 2005 (Holgerson 2010:111). One of their actions was that on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May of 2005 protests were organized in different cities of Sweden with the aim that the government granted residence permits to asylum seekers that had previously been rejected (Ibidem). Evidently, not all persons that made use of the temporary law were granted residence permits. If the rejected remained in the country and if the persons whose temporary residence permits also decided to remain in the country after it expired, some of them could easily be part of the experiences mentioned by Khosravi (2010), Gavanas (2010), Baghir-Zada (2007, 2010) and Hjern & Jeppsson (2005).

Further evidence offered by Andersson and Nilsson of increased rights from the early 1990's, for only one category of undocumented children, is the fact that rejected asylum seekers children can maintain the right of receiving health care. In addition, in the case of education an example of the increase of rights is that "...in May 2007 an inquiry appointed by the government recommended that children whose application for residency has been rejected but who remain in the country without permission, should have the right to preschool activities and education (SOU 2007: 34 cited in Andersson and Nilsson 2009:179)". As a result, since then municipalities have been allocated extra funds to include rejected asylum seekers children in their schools (prop. 2005 / 06,1D11; prop. 2006 / 07: 1D16; prop. 2007 / 08: 1D32 cited in Andersson and Nilsson 2009:179). However, Holgerson (2011: 253) states that not only headmasters can decide whether they accept or not deportable children (which can be seen both as something positive because they can decide to do it and something negative because there is no law that grants undocumented children the right to education and that obliges municipalities to accept them), but in case they accept them the school is not economically reimbursed.

Andersson and Nilsson (2009: 183-185) try to explain why Sweden has this trend opposite to other Western states. According to them there are three factors. First, in part because Sweden has a proportionate electoral system that allows smaller parties with strong preferences to impact platforms of the two bigger parties: the Social Democratic Party and the Moderate Party. Second, even so the most important factor to increase social rights was the financial crisis of the 90's. This better explains that Sweden allowed the right to work to asylum seekers if the decision of

their case was deemed to be prolonged for more than four months and that in the meantime they could arrange their own housing. Third, the increased social rights that have actually created economic costs are related to children and the authors propose that the perspective of many people is that children are “vulnerable” no matter their background.

### **Undocumented migrants: citizens /non-citizens of Sweden**

On the one hand, the life of an undocumented migrant can be regarded as a *Swedish non-citizenship*, meaning to live in Sweden without a residence permit (Holgersson 2011: 247). Part of this quotidianity has already been described in the previous sections addressing work environments, access to health care facilities, schooling and family life. In this sense, Helena Holgersson, through inductive qualitative research with fifteen men and women that do not have a residence permit and live in Gothenburg, identifies the “non-citizenship as a lived experience (2011: 247-249)”. Holgersson’s data is collected through “place-sensitive ethnographic encounters”, interviews, mental maps of Gothenburg, participant observation and analysis of reports of proceedings in the Chamber and the Parliament, as well as follow up of mass media (Ibidem: 250). To identify the “non-citizenship as a lived experience” implies that the category of a *Swedish non-citizenship* goes beyond a legal status. It includes strategies to live in the city and types of interaction in different settings. To live the *Swedish non-citizenship* can actually be seen as a way to construct citizenship. Holgersson conceptualizes this experience as *everyday acts of citizenship*, meaning working, decorating your home and making friends is a way to become a citizen, to act like a citizen in certain spheres (2011: 250).

Some of the spheres or areas where undocumented migrants negotiate their position in society are the following. First, to hold jobs in not regular working places normalizes their life while at the same time they are aware that the working conditions are not as the ones offered to citizens (Ibidem: 260). Khosravi gives an insight to this situation asseverating that “[t]he migrants’ desire to ‘work hard’ and ‘contribute’ to a society that actually rejects any kind of responsibility for them indicates the paradoxical aspects of migrant ‘illegality’ in contemporary capitalism(2010: 103).”

A second sphere are the support organizations that provide spaces to relax while at the same time undocumented migrants usually have to act grateful because power relations between service



providers and service users are not balanced (Holgersson: 2011: 260). It is interesting that Baghir-Zada (2007, 2010) does not include power relations in his research of how undocumented migrants access health care services in Sweden, since the parallel services he studies are clinics and networks functioning as support organizations.

The third space is their house, where people perceive their present and their future and to invest in decorations and personalize the house gives a feeling that there will be a future in Sweden for them (Ibidem: 260-261). The fourth area is the interaction with friends, family and the conditions for creating or not new personal relationships (Ibidem: 260). Should people invest or not in personal relationships? Is there someone willing to invest, to fall in love with an undocumented migrant (Khosravi 2010: 107, 110)?

Finally, there is the very public political sphere. Undocumented migrants have not only remained their acts of citizenship in private or underground activities. They have been public in demonstrations such as the one that the campaign Refugee Amnesty 2005 organized on 7 May 2005 in several cities of Sweden (Holgersson 2010: 111) and the demonstration in Gothenburg on 26 February 2009 where undocumented immigrants asked for a right to asylum (Shakibaie 2010: 6). Furthermore, they have created their own organization *Papperslösa Stockholm*, and used it as a platform for political activities; for instance, on 23 September 2008 some members of the organization were invited to a hearing at the Swedish Parliament to express their views (Gunneflo & Selberg 2010: 182-186). With these actions, even when undocumented migrants are not considered citizens of Sweden, they are *de facto* exercising civil and political rights such as Articles 22 and 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The first one states that “[e]veryone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests (ICCPR Art. 22 (1)).” The second one recognizes that “[e]very citizen shall have the right and the opportunity [...] to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives (ICCPR Art. 25 (a).)”

The exercise of *everyday acts of citizenship* and the political engagement of undocumented migrants can impact their own perception of belonging to the Swedish society. Nevertheless, as Khosravi puts it, to be and undocumented migrant is not really about being excluded but excepted

“...they have not been thrown out, but neither are they considered participants. Undocumented migrants are included in society without being recognized as members (2010: 111).”

### **Undocumented children in Europe and Sweden**

As aforementioned, there are no reliable data of how many undocumented children there are in Europe. Moreover, an attempt to acquire the information is hindered by the possibility of undocumented persons of being deported if they get in contact with authorities, which makes extremely difficult to know how many irregular migrant children there are if they belong to those “...who are *not* enrolled at school; who are *not* registered with a doctor; who do *not* report crimes against them... (O’Connell & Farrow 2007:21).”

An important point in child migration and how children are constructed is the fact that immigration law very often conceives children as property of parents and does not see them as actors (Thronson 2002 cited in O’Connell and Farrow 2007: 27). Is in this sense that laws allow the entrance in a country of a child under dependence of an adult or to become dependent of another adult or carer (O’Connell and Farrow 2007:27). Bhabha expands this idea by arguing that not only law enforcement is carried out by adults, but these policies do not have a child-centered focus which leaves claims that arise from unique circumstances of children not being considered (2009: 446). A clear example is the fact that the child’s agency in the migration process is rather never taken into account, which means “...children are considered dependent rather than independent; in other words, the concept of “the child” as an autonomous entity does not exist in immigration law (Ibidem).” In the specific Swedish context, research has proved that if an undocumented child is a rejected asylum seeker, it is very likely that individual characteristics of the child and his or her family situation were not taken into consideration by the authorities. On the opposite, general assessments are the routine practice (Waldehorn 2007:12).

Another circumstance where children are dependent on others to exercise their rights is the relationship between the undocumented migrant children and the state. Despite international law and some domestic law entitling undocumented children with rights, “...Arendt’s children<sup>16</sup> lack

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<sup>16</sup> In the previous subsection *Am I an undocumented child?* the concept of *Arendt’s children* has been defined.

access to services because entitlement depends on production of a government-issued document, which migrant children are not given. *So the state still retains the monopoly of determining eligibility*, despite the universalist aspirations of the human rights tradition (Bhabha 2009: 450, emphasis added).” According to PICUM, this is particularly plausible in the case of unaccompanied migrant children who had been in shelters and decide to leave them without authorization. In general, in Europe when a child leaves a shelter their asylum application gets on hold. Consequently, access to health care, housing and education becomes very complicated (PICUM 2008: 82- 83).

So far, the construction of migrant children as dependent has been addressed. An additional characteristic attributed to migrant children is their vulnerability. However, O’Connell and Farrow, in the desk study that they conducted to identify the existing available knowledge regarding “when and why migration violates the rights of the child” and if the analysis is performed from the migrant children’s perspectives, explain that to be a child migrant does not necessarily imply vulnerability (2007:7). The vulnerability is socially constructed by the intersection of at least three factors:

- The impact of the destination country’s immigration regime on migrant children and/or their parents/carers;
- The economic situation and labour market position of child migrants and/or their parents/carers;
- The impact of racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination against some groups of migrants (O’Connell and Farrow 2007:29).

From the aforementioned factors, the first one, the immigration regime, has partially been discussed in the previous paragraphs where the dependence of the children on parents, carers or the state is considered as detrimental to regard that children can have agency in the migration process. In addition, Khosravi’s ethnographic fieldwork with undocumented migrants in Stockholm during 2004 and 2006 complemented with fieldwork in Teheran in June 2005 and August 2007 provides information of how Sweden’s asylum policy has been more restrictive since 2000 (2009:38). For instance, the harmonization of asylum policies in the EU and the

implementation of Eurodac since 2003, “an electronic fingerprint database” have affected asylum processes (Khosravi 2009: 41). An example in Sweden of how immigration policies impact on the degree of vulnerability is the use of language analysis to determine the country of origin of an asylum seeker, even when ten per cent of these tests can be wrong ( *Dagens Nyheter* 16 March 2006 cited in Khosravi 2009: 41). The direct impact of this immigration policy in the construction of a child as undocumented or not in Sweden is clear. In 2000 of all the asylum applicants 42 per cent were granted residence permits, by 2005 only 13 per cent had been accepted (Khosravi 2009:41). The decrease in the number of asylum seekers that have been granted residence permits can be seen as a predisposition for the rise of number of undocumented children in Sweden. This is documented by Waldehorn, in the first annual report of the project Utanpapper.nu launched by Save the Children Sweden, where they find out that it is common that separated children and youths that have been denied their asylum application remain in Sweden undocumented (2007:13).

Regarding the second factor, the position in labour market of undocumented migrant’s adults has amply been revised in a previous section<sup>17</sup>. Concerning children, O’Connell and Farrow explain that children that have migrated to Europe with their families have been found employed in different activities. Research has proved that child labour is not necessarily detrimental for the child as long as it does not affect his or her education and it is not harmful to the child. However, “... in some European countries migrant children are more likely to work than national children, and *their work is more likely to be illegal* (2007: 31, emphasis added).” In the Swedish context, regarding labour opportunities and regulations, adolescents and their parents that reside in Sweden without documents mostly work under irregular conditions being paid very low wages without any guarantees ( Westin 2008:15).

The third factor is by far the most ample because undocumented children are being discriminated first and foremost for their legal status. This discrimination under legal status is the beginning of additional discriminations in several aspects of undocumented children’s everyday life, always under the premise of being undocumented.

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<sup>17</sup> See Access to economic, social and cultural rights of undocumented migrants in Sweden.

The INGO Save the Children Sweden conducted a project called *Utanpapper.nu* from 21<sup>st</sup> March 2006 until 21<sup>st</sup> March 2008 that started as a webpage, a helpline and an e-mail address where undocumented children could be in contact with trustworthy adults. Professional counseling was provided through these contacts and the information could be accessed in Swedish, English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian. The project also included admitting children and parents in need of psychotherapeutic treatment at Save the Children's Centre for Children and Youths in Crisis. (Westin 2008: 7- 8; Waldehorn 2007:3-5, 8).

In its second and final report, Sanna Westin explains that by the 21<sup>st</sup> of March of 2008 Save the Children had had contact with a total of 470 children and young adults residing in Sweden or family members of a family residing in Sweden (2008:7). The places where the contacts were made from were more than a half from cities other than the 3 biggest in Sweden. From these three biggest cities, Stockholm was predominant and contacts from Gothenburg and Malmö were made in a lesser extent (Ibidem: 8). From the 470 children and young adults identified as contacts from Sweden, more than half were in the country undocumented either because their asylum application had been rejected or because they had never applied for asylum (Ibidem:9).

Anna Waldehorn, in the first annual report from *Utanpapper.nu* project, states that one of the first findings was that among the experiences of undocumented children it is fairly recurrent that they are primarily seen as undocumented instead of considering them as children with the same rights as the rest of the children in Sweden as the CRC states (Waldehorn 2007: 11). In the following paragraphs we will see how the discrimination of undocumented children in different aspects of their everyday life is being experienced both in Europe and Sweden in particular.

**Education.** PICUM produced a report in 2008, based on field trips and over eighty interviews with representatives of governmental institutions and members of NGO'S as well as contributions of experts, that addresses the conditions under which undocumented children in nine European countries are accessing basic social rights as education, housing and health care (PICUM 2008:4). The countries addressed are Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom. The study includes an analysis of legislative measures to access these basic social rights in each country, as well as the identification of the social networks that are facilitating the provision of these rights (Ibidem:8).

Access to education for undocumented children is considered one of the main routes to initiate social and cultural integration into the host society (Ibidem: 11). Furthermore, Hjern's and Jeppsson's research, based on the request for the authors to create a public health care approach for the reception of refugee children in the greater Stockholm area, demonstrates that in the reconstruction of social networks of newly arrived refugees to host countries key parts are the supportive environments (2005:123). In the case of education the supportive environments are the day care, school, and after-school homes. These settings can become a stable space for newly arrived children where they can establish social relations with the host community (Ibidem: 122). Within this context, the strategy proposed by the authors is based on social support and societal intervention rather than trauma-centered approach (Ibidem: 123). In addition, some countries like Italy and France request that in order to undocumented children to receive citizenship when turning 18, they must have had been registered into school during the previous 3 years (PICUM 2008: 11).

The international instruments that protect the right of undocumented children to education have already been presented in a previous section<sup>18</sup>. Once these legislations are put into practice, the reality is different because children face practical barriers in their attempt to exercise their right, for instance "...lack of identification document, discretion at the local level, fear of being detected, problems with costs for materials and extracurricular activities, housing problems for these families, and precarious living conditions (Ibidem: 22)." Even when undocumented children attend school, either because it is clearly stated in the legislation of some EU countries, it is implied in its wording or at least not directly prohibited; the reality is that most undocumented children will not receive a diploma or an official recognition of their studies while concluded (Ibidem:35).

In the Swedish context, the NGO Save the Children Sweden in 2008 produced a report where it comments on the Swedish government's fourth periodic report to the United Nations regarding the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Sweden, obtaining the

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<sup>18</sup> See As an undocumented child in Sweden, which laws protect me?

information from all its organizational levels, meaning national organization, seventeen district associations<sup>19</sup>, nineteen local branches<sup>20</sup> and the youth association (Save the Children 2008:1-2).

The report depicts that children who do not have documents or have never applied to asylum do not have legal right to education in Sweden. A child whose application has been denied does not lose the right to education unless he or she goes into hiding. Some measures have been taken to enforce the right to education to children in hiding such as a proposal presented by a commission in May 2007 whose aim is "...to give children in hiding the right to education, but other children lacking identity papers are not included in this proposal (Save the Children 2008:22)."

On the other hand, "...there is not ban against admitting them and many heads of school choose to despite the lack of state subsidies in respect of the individual child (Westin 2008: 83-84)." The problem arises when grades and certificates are provided according to national insurance numbers. In this sense, there have been cases of children being hindered the possibility of accessing upper secondary school due to lack of practical routines (Ibidem).

The *Utanpapper.nu* project demonstrated that there have certainly been children discriminated in access to education, especially in pre-school and day care and this is happening, even when most children who were previous asylum seekers do attend to school (Waldehorn 2007: 11; Westin 2008: 15). Furthermore, the difficulty to access day care can sometimes lead to isolation and lack of socialization with other children and adults; in addition, the parents or carers themselves can experience detrimental mental states. Children have presented conditions such as asthma, tuberculosis, bedwetting, deficient teeth hygiene, difficulty to eat, having nightmares or difficulties to sleep (Westin 2008:14).

**Health care.** In its study of how undocumented children access basic social rights as education, housing and health care in nine European countries, PICUM reveals that Spain is the only country that respects fully the CRC in connection with access to health care for undocumented children, meaning that these children have equal access to health care than nationals (2008: 48). This coverage includes unborn children, meaning that "...undocumented pregnant women are

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<sup>19</sup>Including Västra Götaland Region District.

<sup>20</sup> Including Downtown Göteborg Local Branch.

entitled to access the Spanish national health care system free of charge under the same conditions as nationals (Ibidem: 49).”

In practice, no matter the international human rights instruments and national legislation, undocumented children’s access to health care is nuanced by the staff’s discretionary power, complex procedures to be refunded, immigrant’s and doctor’s lack of awareness, fear of being detected, language problems, among other situations (Ibidem: 55, 57, 59, 61).

In Sweden, The 21<sup>st</sup> of May of 2008 the country enacted a new law that granted asylum seekers children and previous asylum seekers children (known as “children in hiding”) right to health care and medical services under the same conditions as Swedish children citizens or residents. The law leaves out undocumented children that never applied to asylum, children that once the application for asylum was rejected left Sweden and they returned without reapplying for asylum and children that entered the country as tourists or for work and overstayed. All of them are entitled only to urgent care without subsidies (Save the Children 2008:4- 5). In fact, Khosravi interprets the denial to respect the right to the highest attainable standard of health to undocumented migrants as “a strategy by the authorities to control the number of undocumented migrants and diminish their capacity to reproduce (2010: 107).”

In practice, access to health care is hindered by not being able to afford getting to the doctor or to acquire the medications. Moreover, the fear of the parents of being identified plays a key factor in this situation, plus the insecurity, of some health care practitioners and administrators of health care centers, of how to provide the service to a child who lacks a national insurance number. In addition, the parent’s lack of access to health care affects as well the condition of undocumented children (Westin 2008:14).

Considering mental health, the *Utanpapper.nu* project evidenced that some adolescents have fear to adults in their neighborhoods and uncertainty about their opportunities of forming a family on their own. On the other hand, younger children have created more a sense of belonging to Sweden, especially since they have been in the country for a long time. Nonetheless, some expressed fear of being arrested and deported (Ibidem: 15). Undocumented children that have undergone family break-ups due to the migratory process frequently express feelings of guilt and



feel disturbed by the separation. Many children that have already experienced violence due to interventions from the police have made fear part of their everyday life (Ibidem: 53).

**Housing.** PICUM, in its abovementioned study, finds out that even when the right to decent housing is protected by several international instruments, none of the European countries that were subject to analysis include this right for undocumented children with families in its national legislations (2008:74). This lack of legislation leaves children in irregular families outside the scheme of social housing and with major problems to enter the private housing market (Ibidem: 86).

Sanna Westin, in the second and final report of the *Utanpapper.nu* project, states that in Sweden, according to the Social Services Act, the services are to be provided to the persons that reside within the perimeter of the determined area. In this sense, the Social Services Act in its wording makes no exception of undocumented children. “[T]here is nothing in the law to prevent an undocumented child from being placed in family accommodation or that the family receives income support or other social allocations (Westin 2008:82).” Nevertheless, the problem of having real access to exercise this right is hindered by the Aliens Ordinance where it is stated that “...the local social welfare committee is bound to inform the police the first time a measure is adopted in a case, if it relates to a foreigner who has not applied for leave to remain even though she or he was under a duty to do so (Ibidem).” Since the scope of this study involves undocumented children living with their families, the strategies to access housing are considered to be the same as the ones described in the section *Access to economic, social and cultural rights of undocumented migrants in Sweden*.

**Family ties.** Save the Children Sweden, in its second and final report of the *Utanpapper.nu* project reports that one of the main concerns of the persons that contacted the helpline during the two years that was in function, was the break-up of the family unit due to immigration rules. In some cases this had already happened from the beginning of the migratory process itself (Westin 2008: 13-14; Khosravi 2010: 109-110). The panorama for this practice to change does not seem favorable. According to Westin, in Sweden the Aliens Act regulates the right of family reunification. It states that children have the absolute right to reunite with a parent that is legally residing in Sweden. An unaccompanied minor can apply for reunification with his parents under

Sweden's territory if he or she obtains leave to remain under the need of protection; otherwise this right is reserved to be exercised in the country where his or her parents reside. Nevertheless the right to family reunification, according to Swedish law, does not apply whatsoever to asylum seekers and undocumented persons (Westin 2008: 85). This is another example of how Bhabha illustrates that immigration policies are not child-centered "...adults can bring dependents to join them, but children cannot bring relatives on whom they are dependent to join them (2009:448)".

In conclusion, this literary review proves that the interest on undocumented migrants in Sweden has been escalating in recent years. Most of the research has been focused from a rights-based perspective either in the legal framework or on the human rights framework. Nonetheless, a lot still need to be done in connection with discovering how undocumented children perceive this reality already depicted by their grown-ups counterparts. Moreover, how they are constructing their own reality and how they conceive themselves in the following years in Sweden. In its conclusions, PICUM (2008) makes this very clear: "it is only through a better knowledge and awareness of the reality of these children that it will be possible to promote specific policies for their integration and protection (2008: 88)." Nonetheless, first we need to know what is it that they expect from Sweden, if it is precisely integration and protection or something else.

## **Chapter 2- Theoretical framework**

### **Children as social agents**

According to Hatch the concept of childhood is a cultural invention in the sense that the elements used to define it depend "...in every culture, in every time period, in every political climate, in every economic area, in every social context (1995:118)." The context where the social construction of childhood takes place is defined as "...a culturally and historically situated place and time, a specific here and now (Ibidem: 141)." Moreover, the personal social interactions that create everyday life create that specific here and now. Consequently, the context is relational because it shapes the child and the child shapes the context in a dialectic interaction (Ibidem: 143). In fact, it can be understood that in everyday life there are "... a multiplicity of times and

spaces all weaving into and interacting with each other (Hernes 1988:104 quoted in Morgan 1996:139).”

It is in this framework where the structural sociology of childhood enters into place because it identifies childhood in a structural context while conceiving childhood as a structural phenomenon due to the fact that it is structured by its context while structuring it at the same time. Therefore, in order to understand everyday experiences of children, their lives need to be linked to the macro-level context and analyze how they impact each other (Alanen 2001a:13). Alanen proposes that this macro-level context should be the “generation”, since it is through this concept that children are defined as a social group and consequently distinguished and separated from other social groups (Ibidem). However, I will apply this perspective using the social construction of “undocumented” as the macro-structure that conglomerates the participants of this research. Moreover, the concept “undocumented” is the one that certainly distinguishes and separates them from having all their children’s rights respected and fulfilled.

The fact that “people become” or “are constructed as” children or adults involves agency since this construction is understood as a practical process (Alanen 2001b:129). In the specific case of children, to recognize their agency goes beyond identifying them as social actors and implies the analysis of the powers or lack of powers of the child “...to influence, organize, coordinate and control events taking place in their everyday worlds (Alanen 2001a:21; Alanen 2001b:131).” Alanen identifies these powers to be determined by the generational structures within which children are positioned (2001b:131). In addition to the generational structure, in the case of undocumented children in Gothenburg I identify another structure that plays an important role in their agency which is precisely to be defined as “undocumented”.

### **Interpretative Reproduction**

The socialization during childhood can be understood as the “...process of appropriation, reinvention and reproduction” of adult’s skills and knowledge (Corsaro 2011:20). It is through collective interactions that “... children negotiate, share and create culture with adults and each other (Corsaro 1992; James, Jenks and Prout 1998 cited in Corsaro 2011: 20). Nonetheless, according to Corsaro the concept of socialization has an individualistic connotation. To overcome

this constraint he coins the concept of *interpretative reproduction*, where the first term addresses “...the innovative and creative aspects of children’s participation in society” and the second term alludes to the fact that children do not simply internalize the society and culture in which they participate, rather children “...are actively contributing to cultural production and change (Corsaro 2011: 20-21).”

This idea of understanding childhood as a phenomenon where children are not mere receptors of the world, but that children are social agents in the construction and reproduction of it can be identified in Qvortrup’s structural perspective of childhood. The author assumes childhood as a particular structural form, where both childhood and adulthood are exposed to the same societal forces and that children are coconstructors of childhood and society (Ibidem: 31). In this sense, interpretative reproduction includes three kinds of children’s collective actions: appropriation from adult’s world, production and participation in peer cultures and contribution to reproduce adult culture (Ibidem: 43).

Alanen’s structural sociology of childhood and Qvortrup’s structural perspective of childhood similarly consider that external factors to the children themselves are part of their degree of agency. However, they differ in the origin of these external causes. Alanen identifies the allocation of a specific generation as the main macro structure that hinders or allows children to exercise their agency; while Qvortrup identifies children as being influenced by the same societal factors as adults while having agency constructing their own childhood and therefore society themselves.

In this research, both views work complementing each other because undocumented children in Gothenburg are located in a generational perspective as children versus adults, while at the same time both undocumented children and undocumented adults are being exposed to the social force of being constructed as “undocumented”.

### **Symbolic interactionism**

“A perspective is an angle on reality, a place where the individual stands as he or she looks at and tries to understand reality (Charon 2007:3)”. In other words, a perspective is the point of view from which we perceive reality and we can have many different perspectives according to the

place where we stand, the role we play, at a given time. Furthermore, each perspective we have is a partial vision of the reality, though it is our reality (Ibidem: 11). Particularly in this research, the participants' perspective is that of persons holding different points of views as children, young adults, migrants, undocumented migrants, rejected asylum seekers, daughters, sons, sisters, students, parishioners, and so on. On the other hand, my interest of grasping the phenomenon of everyday lives and expectations of undocumented children in Sweden from their own perspectives is framed by me standing on the perspective of symbolic interactionism.

Through the conceptual framework of symbolic interactionism persons are seen as: a.) social persons that are constructed by the *social interaction* with other persons; b.) as *thinking* beings whose human action is caused by interaction with others and interaction within themselves in thinking processes; c.) persons *define* their environment according to their social interaction with other persons and through personal thinking processes; d.) the three previous characteristics of *social interaction*, *thinking* and *definition* of the environment are performed in the *present* and the way we use previous experiences is by applying them to define our present; e.) finally, persons are conceived as *active beings* by being *actively involved* in what they do, meaning the *social interaction*, *thinking* and *definition* of the environment (Ibidem: 29-30).

This means that the symbolic interactionism conceptual framework recognizes persons, and in this research I specify it to children and young adults, as social agents because identifies humans as dynamic and rational problem solvers (Ibidem: 189). In a nutshell, a person is viewed “as maker, doer, actor and as self-directing (Ibidem: 190).”

### **Chapter 3- Methodology**

#### **Induction and Deduction**

The two principal methods of scientific activity are deduction and induction. Deduction is when the analysis initiates in a general premise (theory) from which the outcomes (the particular) are deduced. In induction, the observation and analysis of potential patterns in the data leads to the construction of an explanatory theory or the application of a preexisting one (Greig and Taylor 1999: 39; Gilbert 2008: 27).

The qualitative approach for doing research with children is based on the inductive method. This idea that theory is created from data goes hand in hand with the construction of the child as subjective and whose “understanding, knowledge and meanings” are also subjective emerging from social interaction in a given context of time and space (Greig and Taylor 1999:43). For this reason, in qualitative research the methodology used implies theory based on interpreted data. The collection of data can be achieved through “observations, interviews, conversations, written reports, texts (Ibidem)”. An important characteristic of this exercise of interpretation is to do it from the perspective of the child because “situations, meanings, problems are defined in interaction with others (Ibidem: 44)”.

In this particular qualitative research on how undocumented children and young adults live in Gothenburg, Sweden; I have used a mix of inductive and deductive methods. In fact, Charles S. Peirce claimed that deduction, induction and abduction are all stages of scientific investigation (Terra Rodrigues 2011: 132). Abduction is the “... creation of explanatory hypothesis for the facts [...] consists in studying facts and devising a theory to explain them (Ibidem: 135, 138)”, similar to induction begins the process in the particular and moves towards the general (Ibidem: 135). Even when I believe that the analysis of the data must lead to the application of existing theories or in the best outcome to the construction of theory that reflects the lived experiences of undocumented children and young adults in Sweden; I can not deny that as a human being I am also the product of social constructions and that I have preconceived ideas that have led me to the desire of initiating this research and to define research questions from particular standpoints. In this sense, I am also making use of deductive methods by stating, *a priori* the analysis of the collected data, my position regarding children as social agents and how the social interactions that we conduct shape our behavior while we construct meanings in this dialectic relationship.

### **Phenomenology**

In addition to make use of a mix of inductive and deductive methods, the objective to study everyday life experiences of undocumented children and young adults in Sweden from their own perspectives makes the use of phenomenology an appropriate method for recollecting and interpreting the data.

“Phenomenology is the study of lived, human phenomena within the everyday social contexts in which the phenomena occur from the perspective of those who experience them (Titchen and Hobson 2005: 121).” My standpoint is mainly the direct approach of phenomenology, where I look for participants to “...reflect on, and talk about, their subjective experiences of phenomenon in interviews (Ibidem: 122)”. Nonetheless, the interpretation of the data is planned to be done by using the indirect approach of phenomenology, “interpretation through dialogue with texts [transcripts] (Ibidem).” In practice, this means that my main technique for obtaining the data from the perspective of the undocumented children is through qualitative interviews and the method for processing and analyzing the data collected will be by making an interpretation of the transcripts of the recorded conversations that the participants and I will construct together.

Since I am not an undocumented child or young adult and I have not applied ethnomethodology to imbue myself with the everyday life of undocumented children and young adults, a characteristic of the direct approach of phenomenology is how I used observation. First of all, observation can not be a “key method because [me, the researcher] cannot reliably access participant’s subjective meaning contexts (Ibidem: 126)”. Meaning that not being myself an undocumented child or young adult and not applying ethnomethodology, I can not feel or correctly appraise how and undocumented child or young adult experiences his or her life in Sweden, unless I ask them directly in order to access these experiences from their own voices and perspectives. Nevertheless, during the unstructured interviews I shared with the participants examples of common experiences, like living in a small overcrowded apartment, which generated further discussion. This exchange of shared experience during in –depth interviews is part of the direct approach of phenomenology (Ibidem).

The use of the direct approach of phenomenology during the questioning through the unstructured interviews is clear by the open-ended questions proposed to the participants which aim was to “encourage reflection upon everyday experience (Ibidem)”, while looking to clarify how is the undocumented children’s and young adult’s “...understanding of their conscious ways of construing social contexts, situations and logic by which they conduct their activities (Ibidem).”

## **Unstructured research interview**

Once I have exposed the use of both inductive and deductive methods as well as phenomenology as the way of constructing knowledge in this research, I can present the methodological tool through which the data will be gathered: the unstructured research interview.

Kvale and Brinkmann define an interview as “...a conversation that has a structure and a purpose [...] the purpose of producing knowledge (2009: 2-3).” The base of the research interview are the conversations of daily life (Ibidem: 2.), which makes the tool appropriate for the objective of describing and analyzing the lived experience of every day life of undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden. In addition, unstructured interviews are quite adequate when the topic is sensitive or complicated (Fielding and Thomas 2008: 248). The participants of this research share the condition of being undocumented migrants and in some cases to have a deportation order pending at the police office. This situation confers the topic of this research to be a sensitive one.

The aim of in-depth interviews, such as unstructured research interviews, is to understand the experience of the other person and the meaning he or she makes of that experience (Seidman 1991: 3). During the interview the meaning is jointly constructed by the interaction between researcher and informant (Mishler 1986: Ch.3; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:2). One particularity of an unstructured interview is that the researcher has a list of topics that he or she needs the participant to talk about; the phrasing and order of the questions are dependent on the researcher’s judgment on when it is more appropriate to raise the topic (Fielding and Thomas 2008: 247).

In the construction of the interview guide and during the interviews, the phrasing of questions aimed to respect the two principles of research interviews: open-ended questions and encourage communication (Ibidem: 249). Appendix 1 shows how the topics were addressed by open-ended questions in most occasions and the general practice was to request for participants’ descriptions of events, emotions and lived experiences both in pre-defined topics, topics raised by the participants and in follow – up questions during the interviews.



## **Sample definition**

In qualitative research, purposive or judgmental sampling is used when there is no other feasible method to reach participants (Greig and Taylor 1999: 59). It is a judgmental sampling because as a researcher you decide whether the participant has or not the lived experiences necessary to take part in the research (Ibidem). In reality this is rather complicated because you do not know for sure if the participant has or not the required experiences until the interview interaction is taking place. In a sensitive situation as being an undocumented child or young adult, asking several times whether the person is actually undocumented or not can lead to break the beginning of the trust-process. This is how I ended up interviewing a child who is still in the asylum process.

Furthermore, when it comes to the specific case of doing research with children, before reaching this face-to-face interaction where children could decide whether to participate or not I faced the mediation with two types of gate-keepers. In an attempt to reach a wider spectrum of undocumented children I tried to reach participants through different entities such as personal contacts, non-governmental organizations, religious organizations and educative institutions.

Within this institutional context the first type of gate-keepers I had to negotiate with were the contact persons of the families of the undocumented children. The contact persons varied in functions and type of interaction with the children. For instance, one of them was a headmaster of a school, another person was an activist and employee of a youth center, another person works independently on a regular basis with one undocumented family though their first contact was a religious organization, others were representatives of religious institutions such as a priest and two deaconesses, other persons were members of NGO's that work and advocate for undocumented migrants, another person organizes meeting events for migrants and finally another contact person was a co-ethnic of two of the participants.

The second type of gate-keepers is the parents of the undocumented children. In the cases were the contact persons have accepted to invite the families and introduced me in person to them, the parents have always accepted that their children take part in the research, while some of the children have agreed to participate and another one decided to withdraw from it after the interview had concluded. At the end of the fieldwork the access to one couple of parents was denied to me by a NGO who claimed the right to decide whether people making use of their

services could talk to me or not inside its building. This restraint made me lose the chance to confirm if one teenager had decided to take part of the research.

In addition to a purposive or judgmental sampling and a self-selective sampling, a variety of snowball sampling has been used with the institutional gate-keepers. Usually, an institution or a contact person of the family of undocumented children have given me the contact of other institutions or contact persons of other families which sometimes has led to potential participants and at times to dead ends. In the beginning, a key characteristic of snowball sampling was being intentionally breached. The fact that the identification of further sample members of the same network "...continues until no further sample members are obtained (Sturgis 2008: 180)" was not being applied with the intention to have participants contacted from various institutions or persons instead of attempting to interview all participants contacted from the same institution. The intention of this practice was to have a broader representation of participants with different backgrounds such as country of origin, ethnicity, religious beliefs and adherence to social or institutional networks. Nonetheless, as the process of getting hold to participants evolved I realized that even when the original idea of looking for participants in different institutional contexts was to have a sample as diverse as possible; in reality it became rather difficult to even get hold of enough participants.

The need of accessing potential participants to this research through gatekeepers makes it difficult to know with certainty how many negative responses I have had directly from the children or young adults and how many were not given the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to participate or not.

In total, twelve institutional gatekeepers were contacted during the research process. The reasons, provided by the contact persons, for which invitations were not extended to potential participants include that that they did not feel comfortable in doing so; they did not consider appropriate to extend the invitation; they felt they did not have a strong trust bond with them or they did not have regular contact with the potential participants and assumed they would be too afraid to participate (personal communication with 3 different contact persons).

In research with persons under 18 years, the importance of accessing children and at the same time the difficulty of accessing them when the research topic is a sensitive one is brightly

illustrated by Smith while she states that “[r]esearch on sensitive topics can be so difficult to do that children are excluded entirely from becoming participants in such research (2011:18).” In fact, “[t]he conflict between ethical concerns- to protect the children from harm, and their right to express their views and participate- is a particular concern for sensitive topics (Ibidem).” The author gives the example of a research conducted by Atwool in New Zealand in 2008 with the original objective of rescuing the perspectives of children that had been in state care. Due to the obstacle that implied the ethical guideline of having the consent of all the significant adults in the children’s lives as a requirement for conducting interviews directly with children, the result was that all children were excluded from the research and instead social workers were interviewed (Ibidem:19).

Finally, in the process of contacting potential participants I had a personal constraint. Not being able to speak Swedish hindered my ability to approach directly to potential participants and to depend entirely on contact persons, gatekeepers and eventually on interpreters. I believe that, while doing qualitative research through interviews, being able to communicate directly with interviewees is fundamental to create a link and trust between the participant and the researcher. Moreover, these encounters and conversations previous to the actual research interview can facilitate to have a better interview. In my case, since I do not speak Swedish and most of the informants spoke a little bit of English, this interaction prior and subsequent to the interview was also dependent on the interpreter as intermediary of the participant and me, not leaving enough space to further communication.

### **Validity and trustworthiness**

According to Seidman, It can be considered that the research that uses qualitative research interviews has validity if we accomplished to understand how the participant understands and makes meaning of his or her experience (1991: 17). Moreover, under a symbolic interactionist perspective the interview is “...based on mutual participant observation”, meaning the validity of data is achieved by the mutual understanding between researcher and participant (Fielding and Thomas 2008: 263).In this sense, the fact that the interviews have been conducted with an

interpreter calls to reflection regarding the actual achievement of mutual understanding between the participants and the researcher<sup>21</sup>.

A further way of confirming validity of the data is that during the analysis of the data you can pay special attention to internal consistency during the interview and possible external consistency (Seidman 1991: 19). Accordingly, Kapborg and Berterö state that in qualitative research internal validity is the one of most importance. Internal validity is considered to have been achieved when "... the researchers demonstrate the reality of the participants through a consistent line and quotations from the interviews (Kapborg and Berterö 2002: 54)".

In a process of reflection regarding how far I have achieved internal validity within the interviews, the use of some leading questions and not always asking appropriate follow-up questions have taken part in some interviews. I will not try to find excuses, rather to point out possible reasons for these inappropriate situations by reinstating my lack of proficiency in both English and Swedish, plus feeling insecurity at some points of the interview when I could see the interviewee was getting tired and me having the feeling that the interpreter was translating neither idiomatic nor verbatim.

Nonetheless, after analyzing the whole interviews I believe this research has sufficient internal validity if we take in consideration the extensive quotations that reinforce the statements by providing in different wording similar ideas not only from the same interview, but in some cases different participants making stronger other participants' statements.

### **Ethical considerations**

Düvell poses a very interesting ethical consideration for under research of undocumented migrants in small countries caused by the fact that informants and locations could be identified easily (2010: 3). The way I consider this ethical dilemma in my research is by avoiding mentioning names of non-governmental entities where the contact with undocumented children was achieved. Furthermore, locations of contacts and meetings with the children have been kept confidential for almost everyone that is external to the research. Even inside the facilities the

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<sup>21</sup> This reflection is addressed in the following section of *Ethical considerations*.

reason of my presence there has been kept concealed as much as possible to the persons that are not the direct contact person or parents of the child that will participate in the research.

Furthermore, in the following chapter where the results and analysis of the data are presented, in the participant's quotations all first names, names of places and any other data that can make the country of origin, address or places of regular mobility of the participants are anonymized with symbols or different names.

### **Informed consent**

On the subject of informed consent, in research with children under the age of 15, informed consent shall involve both the child in question and the adult or adults that have parental responsibility. Informed consent is about facilitating the child knowledge in three basic points regarding the research: first, that he or she decides if he or she wants to participate in the research or not; second, that he or she knows he or she can withdraw from the research at any point he or she decides so; and third, he or she knows exactly what is expected from him or her if he or she decides to participate in the research (Greig and Taylor 1999: 149-150).

The first two basic points were clearly stated in writing in the informed consent form and in speech at the beginning of each interview. The predefined informed consent form provided by the coordinator of the International Masters Program in Social Work and Human Rights at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden was personalized for this research with children and young adults. The changes included a line for the parents to express their permission for their child to participate and another line for the child to express his or her acceptance to participate in the research. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, I expressly requested both parents and children not to write their names in the forms but to write with their own handwriting their corresponding permission and acceptance to participate. In some cases the participants wanted to sign and I only requested that in their signature their name could not be deciphered for matters of confidentiality. The only person that wrote a name, instead of a signature or the legend "I accept to participate in this research" was a young adult. Nonetheless, he expressed that under that name he was not recognizable in Sweden.

Moreover, the fact that people decide whether they decide to participate or not via the informed consent form, makes the sample to be self-selective (Seidman 1991:42). An example of self-

selectiveness, from the fieldwork for this research, is the decision of withdrawal from the research taken by a child almost two weeks after we met for the interview. In this case, the family was first contacted through the mother, who gave the consent to interview her daughter. This conversation was performed through an interpreter who translated from the mother tongue of the woman to English and vice-versa. Second, the contact person of the family, who works on a regular basis with the girl, invited her to take part in the research and the girl accepted.

Nonetheless, once we met for the actual interview and the contact person was functioning as interpreter from Swedish to English and vice-versa, during the explanation of the form of informed consent the girl expressed to me she was not sure if she wanted to take part of the research or not. At this point, I proposed to her several options: a) we could just get to know each other that day and we could conduct the interview in a further meeting; b) at some point the girl proposed that we could start trying with some questions and she would start answering and I clarified that if we did that then we would actually be performing the interview; c) since she hesitated at this I told her that if she was at least a little interested we could start with the interview and she could tell me to stop at any moment. She finally agreed to the third option. Since she never asked to stop and we actually concluded the interview, at the end I asked if she would let me use or not the information and she restated she was not sure. Therefore we agreed that in the following days she would let me know her decision. A couple of days later she told me, through her contact person, that she did not want me to use the information without giving further explanations. I actually find her decision as a proof of children's agency and decision-making capacity. Moreover, her decision to withdraw from the research can be interpreted as a successful connection and trust between participant and researcher (MacNaughton and Smith 2005 cited by Smith 2011: 20-21).

Finally, regarding making explicit what was expected from the participants during the interview, during the invitation to participate it was made clear that the interview would consist of a conversation. At the moment of the interview it was stated that what the participant felt and thought was the right answer, since there were really no right or wrong answers but the participant's answer was the one I cared about.

### **Children's risks in participating**

According to Greig and Taylor (1999: 154), it is important to consider the potential emotional, physical, social and psychological risks children have while participating in a given research. Assessing what I require participants to do in order to obtain the information does not seem to imply any physical, emotional or psychological risks. There is in fact a social risk of evidencing their lack of legal status, which in turn could have legal and social consequences for them. This social risk is considered to be worthwhile for two reasons. First, children's and young adults' participation in the research implies their recognition as active social agents. Second, the recognition of the specific participants as co-constructors of his or her everyday life by recognizing the importance of his or her perspective of his or her situation.

In addition, a type of debriefment was facilitated in the final stage of the interviews where I changed the roles of researcher and participant and invited the participants to ask any questions or doubts about me as a person and about the interview. The aim of this exercise was to make a reflection of power relationships between them and me as participant and researcher and as child and adult.

In the interviews with children, I wanted to make evident to them that I recognize that they possess power in different ways. For instance, as Punch (2001:23-24) evidences the relationship between children and adults is not one of dependency but of mutual interdependencies that are continuously redefined according to the context where the interaction is taking place. Another way to recognize this interdependency was in the wording of the invitation letter issued to the participants, where I stated I needed their help to write my final assignment in order to graduate.

### **Interpreters as intermediaries**

Valdés and Angelelli define an interpreter as a person who works in different settings and whose function is to "...mediate the communication between many different types of interlocutors, and use their two languages to convey the spoken discourse of individuals who speak one of their languages to individuals who speak their other language (Valdés and Angelelli, 2003: 58-59)." According to the same authors, the action of interpreting is defined by professionals of interpretation and translation "... as the rendering of one message produced in one language (the source language) into another (the target language) (Valdés and Angelelli, 2003:59)."

Moreover, the role of an interpreter within research has been analyzed by several authors; Kapborg and Berterö try to explain themselves the validity of their research conducted using ten interviews with future Lithuanian nurses aided by English-speaking interpreters. They define the role of the interpreter either as someone that provides "...verbatim translation, in which the interpreter acts only as a conduit between the interviewer and the interviewee [...]; or acting more independently –dominating the interview- when involved in an intervention (Kapborg and Berterö, 2002: 52-53)".

Regarding the use of interpreters in order to be able to conduct the interviews for this research, it is important to clarify that an interpreter was needed in three out of four interviews. The role of the two different interpreters was not to perform a verbatim translation for two main reasons. First, because the verbatim style of interpreting looks for "...linguistic accuracy at the expense of sensitivity to emotional components of an interview (Jentsch, 1998:284)." and I was certainly looking for sensitivity regarding the research topic. Second, because both interpreters were not professionals, meaning they are neither a hundred percent fluent in English and neither have been trained as interpreters.

Another factor to take into consideration while performing cross-language research is the degree of openness the participant can demonstrate towards the interviewer while having a third person as intermediary of all the speech exchange. Taking as point of departure the literature review that Williamson et. al. present as part of the research note they wrote from their cross-language research, that included 19 first- time couples and 29 grandparents<sup>22</sup>, the role of an interpreter in qualitative cross-language research that shares common characteristics with the research participants requires to acknowledge that "...the comfort and familiarity that can result from matching interpreters and research participants on certain characteristics can also limit the breadth and depth of interview data (Murray and Wynne 2001 cited by Williamson et.al., 2011: 383)."

In the three interviews where the interpreter was required, the child or young adult had already a previous, and apparently positive, relationship with the interpreter. In two interviews the interpreter was a person collaborating at a religious institution where the participants are members.

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<sup>22</sup> The interpreter worked with the non- English speaking Chinese grandparents.



In a third interview the interpreter was a person who had been providing recreational activities for several months in an organization from which the participant had been taking part. Consequently, in every case the participants had a previous established relationship with the interpreter which was reflected in the easiness with which they expressed themselves.

This previous contact is also recognized as a fact that might have hindered the two children's and the teenager's confidence to express themselves fully, since the interpreter was someone they were going to keep seeing and having contact with. Moreover, the interpreter was someone that knew their parents and at some point could breach the confidentiality we had agreed upon in case he or she could have decided that some information provided by the children or teenager could put the participant or it's family in risk. Nonetheless I believe the participants felt confident with the interpreters and to show this impression I will quote a girl's phrase to look at the delicate information that some participant's felt confident enough to share with me while having an interpreter as intermediary:

*Ana: And how did you find this family [we were talking about her foster family]?*

*Participant: It's through the social services because one time I went to the doctor and said that I had tried to kill myself several times. The doctor got worried and sent the... like after that to the social services and I said I could not live with my mother anymore.*

*(12 year old girl)*

Then again, when the interpreter and the participant belong to the same ethno-cultural group, the social position of the interpreter within this group can affect the participant's performance during the interview (Edwards, 1998; Murray and Wynne, 2001 cited by Williamson et.al., 2012: 383). In both interviews were the interpreter and the participant shared ethno-cultural background, I could perceive that the interpreter either seemed to add to my interventions while translating into the participants' mother tongue and in occasions not always translated into English all that the participants had expressed. In this sense, I believe that if the interpreter perceives the children as social agents or not is fundamental to the attitude he or she took while performing the simultaneous translations.

### **Parent's presence**

Another factor to take into consideration is the presence of the children's parents during the interview. In this research, only one interview was conducted with the presence of the child's mother. Children that participate as informants in research, have the right to decide whether their parents or carers be present in the research interview (Alderson 1995 cited in Mudaly and Goddard 2009:267).

Even when this practice was not considered ideal by the researcher because the youngest participants were already 12 years old; this right was respected and one of the interviewees decided he wanted his mother to take part in the interview. The impression is that the mother and the interpreter were trying to guide the boy at some points of the interview. In order to neutralize this action I continuously affirmed the boy that his words, his impressions, his feelings and his thoughts were the ones that I was interested in and that I believed what he was telling me.

### **Anonymity**

With reference to anonymity, following the idea of children as social agents I suggested each participant to choose the pseudonym he or she wanted me to use for the report. The background of the proposal is to allow the child to select a name with whom he or she feels comfortable with and feels identified with in order to decrease the level of objectivation that the use of pseudonyms or codes can have on the image that the reader will create of the participant while reading the quotes extracted from his or her oral statements.

Following this exercise two participants requested not to remain anonymous. One informant motivated this decision by explaining that she wants the world to know her story. Another informant expressed that he was brave, he was not afraid of people knowing his name and that he was proud that he had answered all the questions of the interview. First, the desire to participate in the research and second, the desire of their real name to appear in the research report can be interpreted as children's and young person's desire to be heard and to their points of view to be taken into consideration in matters that impact directly their life. Children and young adults want to be the protagonists of their own stories as well as the storytellers of them and not depend on adults to speak for them. Somehow, this is what this research is trying to be, a mean through where undocumented children and young adults can tell the story of their everyday life and the

rest of us let ourselves be amazed with them and take as point of departure their points of view in the creation of policies that affect them.

To decide whether to use the names of the participants that requested me to do it or to make them anonymous was not an easy decision. On the one hand, Piper and Simons (2005: 57) describe how the anonymization of participants is a way to offer confidentiality of the data and protection of the participant's private life. On the other hand, in Harcourt's (2011:42-44) research with 25 five and six year old children in Singapore where children measured the quality of their experiences in pre-school settings, children asked for their real names to show in the research report. The children thought using their real name would show who they really were. Harcourt comments on this that "[g]iving children the option to determine how they wish to be referenced in any written work is an important aspect of respecting children and invites them to hold a degree of control as active participants (2011:44)". This idea is in line with this research's objective to hear, make visible, describe and analyze the everyday life and future expectations of undocumented children in Gothenburg, Sweden from their own perspective. As Parker (2005: 17 quoted in Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:73) states, even when anonymity can protect the participants of a research, a side effect can be to "deny them the very voice in the research that might originally have been claimed as its aim".

Nonetheless, children's right to decide how they want to be referenced is constrained to the fact that there is in fact no risk involved for them to show their real name (Harcourt 2011:44). With all this in mind and taking into consideration that the research is being conducted in Sweden, the standpoint of the Swedish Research Council's expert group on ethics is the one that guided my decision to finally use pseudonyms. The Declaration of Helsinki, in its latest version of 2008 Article 23, states that "[e]very precaution must be taken to protect the privacy of the research subjects and the confidentiality of their personal information and to minimize the impact of the study on their physical, mental and social integrity (Declaration of Helsinki, quoted by Swedish Research Council 2011: 69)". This is how, for matters of respecting the ethical guidelines for doing research by the Swedish Research Council's expert group on ethics, I decided to use to refer to the participants of this research by their age and gender.

## **Children at risk**

While working or doing research with children, an important factor to have clear is which procedure to follow in case you identify a child as being at risk. In the particular case of undocumented children, to think about which measures to take is of overall importance because the regular guidelines of contacting institutions such as the social services or the police are not an option when the family in question has been issued a deportation order or is hiding from the police.

As in the case of deciding whether to respect or not the decision of some of the participants of not anonymize them, the procedure to follow in case I encounter a child at risk during the research is determined by the fact that the research is being conducted in Sweden. It is in the Swedish law that if “a researcher, through his or her work on a project, becomes aware of something that legally must be reported (e.g. child abuse or paedophilia)” he or she is obliged to report, leaving the professional secrecy in second importance (Swedish Research Council 2011:68). Nonetheless, in the situation of meeting a child at risk, in first instance, I would try to talk to the child without the presence of the person who is putting the child in risk and I would ask the child if he or she wants to take measures regarding the situation. In case the child does not want to take any action I would inform him or her of my legal responsibility to take precautions and discuss with him or her available options. The discussion together and the precautions that I would take would always be in tune with the child’s rights to be informed, to participate in decisions that directly affect him or her and having in mind the principle of the best interests of the child; all according to the UNCRC.

In this particular case of undocumented children, the available options are not the police or social services, but the relevant NGO’s that have been active in the arena of undocumented migrants in Sweden and in Europe. For instance, Rosengrenska, Ingen Männsika är Illegal, Save the Children, Roda Korset, PICUM and religious institutions that I am aware are providing services to undocumented migrants.

In a second glance, there is a need of change in the social policies of Sweden in order to include all undocumented children and their families in the provision of all the services that include the Swedish welfare state. If not viable in the near future, at least an emphasis needs to be placed in

the needs of undocumented children at risk to be able to receive the necessary support through governmental institutions to the same extent as Swedish children or children with permits to reside in the country. An example of how social policies can be changed is the campaign launched by Ingen Männsika är Illegal called “Ain’t I a Woman?”. The Swedish network successfully advocated through this campaign for the acceptance of undocumented women that experience domestic violence into women’s shelters.

### **Analysis**

In the following section the profile of the research participants, the technical considerations during the interviews and the transcriptions of the interview data; as well as how the analysis is conducted are presented.

#### **Profile of the participants**

The testimonies provided by four research participants give sustain to the next chapter. In total I conducted five interviews, but only four are used in the analysis because one interviewee decided to withdraw from the research. From the remaining four I will give a brief profile without breaching the participants’ anonymity.

The first participant is a 19 year old undocumented young female adult. She comes from the Middle East. By the time of the interview she had been living in Sweden for two years. The interview was conducted with the help of a female interpreter, in this sense the cross-language dialogues went from English to the teenager’s mother tongue and from her mother tongue to English. Her experiences include having lived in Sweden as undocumented while she was still under 18 years old, as well as her experiences now as an undocumented young adult.

The second participant is a 12 year old boy who is in the asylum process. He comes from the Middle East, from the same country as the previous informant. By the time of the interview he had been in Sweden for six months expecting the answer from Migrationsverket regarding the acceptance of his refugee status or the denial of the same. His mother was present during the interview. The interview was conducted with the help of the same female interpreter that helped me during the previous interview, interpreting also from his mother tongue to English and vice-versa.

The third participant is a 12 year old undocumented girl. She also comes from the Middle East, but from a different country than the two previous participants. By the time of the interview she had been in Sweden for four years, from which one or two had been already as an undocumented child. The interview was conducted with the help of a male interpreter, in this sense the cross-language dialogues went from English to Swedish and vice-versa.

Finally, the last participant is a 26 year old undocumented young male adult. He comes from Eastern Europe. By the time of the interview he had been in Sweden for one year and nine months, from which two months had been already as an undocumented migrant. The interview was conducted in English. His experiences addressed in this research include both entering as undocumented to a European country while he was 15 years old and also his experiences as an undocumented young adult in Sweden.

For matters of protection to the participants, I deliberately do not mention the exact country they come from and mention instead the geographical area where the country is located. The gender and age of the participants has not been changed and this will be the information I will use when quoting them in order to make possible for the reader to identify who provided which information.

### **Technical considerations**

The interview settings tried to be as child- friendly, in the case of the minors, as possible. Three interviews were conducted in religious institutions. From them, in two interviews the space and general setting was rather comfortable, nonetheless we had a couple of interruptions during both interviews. According to the interpreter, to perform the interview in the religious institution had been the choice of the participants, plus it suited her the most.

For the third interview that was conducted in a religious institution the space we used was not comfortable at all. There were no proper rooms available and the three of us had to sit down in a small storehouse with no windows or ventilation. During the interview we were once interrupted by someone who needed to take out something from what was kept in there. The religious institution also suited the best for the interpreter because this place was his only meeting point with the participant.

Regarding the fourth interview, the one conducted only between the participant and the researcher; I asked the participant to choose the place where we could sit down and talk for approximately an hour. He decided to leave the decision to me and we used a study room from a public library. The space was adequately furnished and provided enough privacy.

The four interviews were conducted between the 20th of March and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June of 2012. They lasted between forty two to forty eight minutes each. A verbatim transcription of each interview was systematized. This type of transcription was decided in order to continue the analytical process of the data (Fielding and Thomas, 2008: 257; Kvale and Brinkman, 2009:180-181). The following use of symbols was required during the transcriptions: words in between parenthesis () mean the researcher's notes or impressions regarding body language or something that was expressed by non verbal communication; and words in between brackets [] mean that the researcher was not able to understand or decipher what has been told, meaning the verbal communication was unintelligible once the transcriptions were carried out.

Once the verbatim transcripts were concluded, the next step was the coding process. Coding is the "...process of assigning conceptual labels to different segments of data in order to identify themes, patterns, processes and relationships (Hodkinson, 2008:87)." The codes were both concept driven and data driven. "Concept-driven coding uses codes that have been developed in advance by the researcher, [...] whereas data-driven coding implies that the researcher starts out without codes, and develops them through readings of the material (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009: 202)." This process of using both pre defined codes and to construct codes out of the analysis of the transcripts responds to the phenomenological approach where I interpret the participants' responses (which I initially intended them to answer certain themes from the interview guide) and make sense of them through their own context and their own interpretations.

The interpretation of the data is planned to use both direct and indirect approaches of phenomenology. The application of the direct approach is patent in what I aim to construct with the analysis, which is a typification of participants' own understandings. This typification "...describes and interprets way participants made sense of a situation and which were either common to all participants or to all instances within one case (Ibidem)." The typification is the construction of the categories identified in the content of the interviews. In this kind of

interpretation I will make use of the inductive method by trying to “...understand participant’s constructs by leaping from objective to subjective meaning context – achieved through bracketing/suspending prejudices and prior theoretical understandings (Ibidem).” Meaning, being aware of my preconceptions I will intentionally leave them aside while identifying and defining the categories that will function as the guideline for the analysis of the data.

On the other hand, how I will construct this typification is more in line with the indirect approach. The analysis of the transcriptions will be the product of the use of hermeneutics in two senses. First, my own interpretations will work in “...dialogue, dialectically with the text within hermeneutic circle” ; second, the analysis of the transcriptions or texts will itself be a “hermeneutic circle – reiterative process of looking at parts in relation to a whole and whole in relation to parts (Ibidem).”

This means that on the one hand, my interpretations and my theoretical framework will be generated from the analysis of the transcriptions of the interviews and in a circular process my own interpretations and theoretical background will impact the analysis of the defined categories. On the other hand, the analysis of each transcription implies to see the connections between a particular category with the rest of the text and the connections and interactions between the whole transcriptions with particular categories. In another level of analysis, each transcription will be considered as a part and all the transcriptions together will be considered the whole.

#### **Chapter 4 - Results and Analysis of Interview Data**

In the following chapter the results and analysis of the four interviews are presented. Before presenting the data generated through the interviews I just want to mention again that the production of this social interaction between each participant, the interpreters and the researcher was understood by the researcher through the lenses of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism implies that human behavior is social. Through social interactions we develop shared meanings. Therefore stories do not represent individual life but they are a social production (Earthy and Cronin, 2008: 426).

As a researcher, I impacted the social construction of each participant’s story by making use of the interview guide. With it I highlighted and shaped the story instead of focusing on the whole



life of the participant. I mean that I helped them to construct their life from an undocumented person's perspective because that was my objective and I deliberately left aside other periods of their life.

Moreover, stories are also part of political processes because power structures define what type of stories can be told and in which manners and which stories are not allowed to be told (Ibidem: 426-427). This is especially important when analyzing the generated data, because as much rapport, openness and confidence that could have been created during the interview, the overall structure in which these stories are being told limited the participants or could have made them overemphasize their experiences in order to make a statement they could have thought appropriate to the objectives of the research.

### **Results and Analysis**

The following pages will show and interpret the codes that were predefined both by the general themes contained in the interview guide, as well as the codes that were constructed by the phenomenological analysis of the data generated by the interviews. The codes themselves are aligned in a way that the research questions can be answered by the analysis of the participant's experiences.

#### **❖ MIGRATORY STATUS**

In order to analyze the participants' experiences, it was important to hear from them that their migratory status corresponded to an undocumented child or young adult. Three out of four participants were rejected asylum seekers who by the time of the interview were undocumented. The time they had been living in Sweden as undocumented migrants varied and in some cases was not clear. One participant stated that her papers had already been sent to the police and one of them mentioned clearly several times during the interview<sup>23</sup> that there was a deportation order pending on him:

*Ana: And why don't you have the documents for being in Sweden?*

*Participant: I really don't know it about that because we gave our case to Migrationsverket. They didn't accept our reasons and they told use that we are lying.*

*Ana: So, you applied for asylum and they rejected?*

*Participant: Yes.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

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<sup>23</sup> These quotes will come later when addressing future expectations and job access.

Another testimony is the following:

*Ana: And what happened, why did you ended up living in Sweden without permission?*

*Participant: My father died in (home country). They murdered him.*

*Ana: And did you apply for asylum here in Sweden?*

*Participant: Aha. We applied for asylum but we were denied and the papers were sent to the police.*

*Ana: Okay. How long ago were they sent to the police?*

*Participant: One or two years ago.*

*(12 year old girl)*

The final quotes express not only one participant's migratory status in Sweden, but also previous experience, while he still was under 18 years, as rejected asylum seeker in another country:

*Ana: And since when have you been here (we were talking about Sweden) without permission?*

*Participant: About two months.*

*Ana: and you have told me that you have applied for asylum, right?*

*Participant: Yes*

*Ana: And, why did they reject your application.*

*Participant: Because, because there my situation is kind of hard, not hard, but because of my country they will gonna make it come in the European Union so they want to send everybody from my countries, not just only me. A lot of people they want to send back to them country and to wait that we will, that we should come in the European Union and then after that like to be free.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

The oldest participant's experiences, the one who is 26 years old, are double valuable because he is still a young adult (a person up to 29 years old) and because he had previous experience as asylum seeker while he was still under 18 years old:

*Participant: When I have go to the Germany I was 14 year, 99, it was not war in the (home country). And then in this time I go to the Germany, my mother have paid for somebody that she, that she'll bring me to the Germany... over the grants. And then I was in the asyl process. But it was the problem because I was... I was 4 years there, so I was in the school and everything. But 2004 when was the prime minister (the name has been removed for identity protection of the participant) he has said that everything is fine in the (home country). It's no war. It's no nothing. Everybody should return back. My brother and my sister they have get permission because my, they was before me into Germany. But for me my stepfather he don't want to [sign], so and then after that I must to go back.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

## ❖ IDENTITY

As previously addressed in the section of "Anonymity", a common factor among three interviewees was the desire to be identified by their real name in the research. This desire was expressed during the informed consent process, where their signature or a self-written phrase of

acceptance of participation in the research was requested; and also a pseudonym decided by them was asked for. Two participants clearly stated they wanted to be identified by their name:

*Ana: Do you want to choose the name that I can write in the paper?*  
*Participant: Oh, is okay to use my name.*  
*(19 year old young female adult)*

*Participant: I think it is good that my name is here because I will be the voice of some other children (he wanted to write his name and that I did not use a pseudonym in the report). Should I sign this, because I have a signature if you didn't know that.*  
*Ana: but, is your name in the signature?*  
*Participant: You can not read my name when I do my signature.*  
*Ana: then you can sign if you want to.*  
*Participant: I am very brave, I am not afraid.*  
*Ana: Ahm... You can choose what name I'm going to write in the paper.*  
*Participant: I like my name very much.*  
*(12 year old boy in the asylum process.)*

A different way of expressing the desire of making use of their real identity was the use of a second name to express their will to participate in the research. This attitude is interpreted as a need of recognition as a person with a personal name and not as an anonymous informant.

*Ana: And I would like you to sign this, because then I need to prove that you did sign. And I think we can just like...*  
*Participant: Mhm... okay. My name or...*  
*Ana: No, no names. Or, can you...could I read your name in your signature?*  
*Participant: Yes*  
*Ana: Then no.*  
*Participant: Okay*  
*Ana: (he wrote a name) But is that your name? Your real name?*  
*Participant: No*  
*Participant: this is my second name*  
*Ana: I don't want anyone to be able to recognize you*  
*Participant: No, it's okay. Here no one will recognize me.*  
  
*(26 year old young male adult)*

Finally, another participant stated her identity by signing with the first letter of her name. Nonetheless, I am not completely sure if she wanted me to use her name in the report because the dialogue hold between the informant and the interpreter was not translated to me into English and I did not make an appropriate follow-up question requesting the interpreter to clarify the meaning of her words. The interpreter's final translation was that it was up to me to choose the pseudonym for the informant.

The position informants take regarding their own identity put on the table the discussion of children and young adults as social agents. Three out of four participants of this research identify himself or herself as someone with a personal identity and with a possibility of agency in the moment they make themselves visible by wanting their real names to be used in the quotes or by signing the informed consent form with second names (which are still their names and perhaps the name usually used in their home countries and therefore providing a stronger sense of belonging).

### ❖ EVERYDAY LIFE

In order to enter into the participants' ideas regarding the concept of everyday life I asked them to talk about an ordinary day of their life. From the activities, feelings, emotions and experiences occurred during the span of time of 24 hours, the following categories could be identified as transversal to the everyday life of undocumented children, young adults and one child who is in the asylum process.

Everyday life includes several aspects of the participant's lives such as feelings, school, interpersonal relationships, use and meaning of the church, segregation, housing arrangements, access to healthcare, access to economic life, and use of the public and private space, among others.

The following information is included in the research report in order to answer the first research question: How is the everyday life of undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden constructed and experienced?

#### **Feelings: fear and resentment towards the failed asylum process**

Every day life include what we do on a regular basis and feelings generated within this activities. In the approach to participants everyday life, some of them first elicited feelings rather than activities. In this section are included the feelings that the young adult participants expressed regarding their everyday life. There is no attempt to generalize these findings to the other participants. The fear feeling was only identified in the daily experiences of one participant. It is evident that this feeling takes part of his everyday life as it is present in several moments of his day. The fear feeling constrains this young adults' right to live with the highest attainable standard of not only physical but mental health:

Ana: Like how is one of your days?

Participant: My days is like, when I go to sleep I've been afraid. When I wake up I've been afraid. Even when I go into city like example to, to, to meet someone who is important for me, it's afraid because I must to look in every corner if is there police or if somebody following me is this means like I have been like, I have been like murder or something like that. So it's something like that. And then it's scared, even if you don't have. You can not go like free person in the city to buy like example shoe or, you know to go somewhere. Even if you are very young and the young people love to go into disco or to walk with friends and I can't.

(26 year old young male adult)

Another feeling identified as part of the two young adults is a resentment towards the failed asylum process. This resentment is considered to be part of their every day life because it is connected to the way they make use of the city of Gothenburg, meaning how their spacial mobility is being constructed from the feelings they have included as part of their life.

Regarding Migrationsverket, one participant stated:

*I don't like people, when you tell the truth to them they call you liars and then you lie to them they say: okay, it's right. They are kind of stupid. I have learned you have to tell the truth. We told the truth and they call us liars so I don't like that. They are stupid and mean.*

(19 year old young female adult)

The other participant verbalized the feeling of resentment while making a recount of what he had been through during his asylum process. His resentment had been constructed due to the way he had been treated during the asylum process and by having the impression that his migratory process had not included enough research from Sweden's officers:

*Participant: I was been into five places. They have deport me from one place to another place and then they have playing with my mind because in this time (home country) have opened the grants to say like that. So and then 18 thousand people have go and search asyl process. And then migration have think that I've been one of them, so that's why they have played with me like they have sent me to another different places because they don't know if they should process me in this time or no[...]They have called some person who is supported to speak about (his nations) problems and he works in embassy and he has said [...]oh fine, no problem. But there is a problem. But he's in Sweden [...] The people is ... I think the migration is stupid, theoretic stupid. If I will gonna say, like example if I will gonna say I've been the terrorist or I have killed a lot of people. Then they would gonna say "Oh välkommen, come sit, you are going to get permission to stay in my country.*

(26 year old young male adult)

## School

The schooling involves three of the four participants, the two children and the young female adult. As social actors, social agents and social human beings, children and young persons that go to school spend a large amount of their time within this institution. Therefore, the research interest went beyond their access or denial of going to school, to explore the relationships that are being constructed inside this institution regarding social interactions with peers and with adults.

According to Corsaro (2011) children acquire information and produce information through the interpretative reproduction. This dialectic interaction is perceived in some of the relationships that the two participants interviewed in this research expressed that occur in their schooling environment. For the three participants that will be quoted in this part the school has a meaning in the establishment of friendships and trust relationships with Swedes and/or foreigners like them.

It is important to mention that none of the informants of school age have been denied their right to education, just like the CRC and the ICESCR provides them<sup>24</sup>. As a matter of fact, the three of them identified attending school as a part of their everyday life when I asked them to describe an ordinary day of their lives:

*I carefully wash my face every morning. Is very important with my hair. It is important for me. I go to school. Then I do my homework everyday very carefully.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

*So, in the beginning of the day I go to school, then I come home and maybe watch TV or go out in the summer. And some football practice as well.*

*(12 year old girl)*

*Wake up in the morning of course. I go to school so I get up very early. I usually go to the library directly from school. Sometimes I come to the church directly after the library and sometimes I go back to home.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

The school as a place and of socialization with peers is transversal in the three interviews that correspond to the informants in school age. In this sense, one of the three children's collective actions within Corsaro's interpretative reproduction is being put into action. That is the

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<sup>24</sup> For further information read the "As an undocumented child in Sweden, which laws protect me?" section.

production and participation in peer cultures (Corsaro 2011). The different ways the participants are producing and reproducing peer culture is addressed in the following quotes:

*Ana: and how is school?*

*Participant: it is very good. I have many friends there.*

*Ana: Do you like your school?*

*Participant: Yeah!*

*Ana: why?*

*Participant: I play a lot with children there. Is very good, free school. We can play very much.*

*Because in (home country) school is not that happy. The principal is always angry with you if you play or are happy or smiley. It is not like this, they want happy children here.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

The girl and the young female adult who attend to school demonstrate the same importance towards making use of the school as a place where friendships are built with peers. Nonetheless, it is possible to recognize conditions of racial segregation in their everyday experience of going to school:

*Ana: And how is your relationship at school with your classmates?*

*Participant: I got only one friend in the school. But we are close.*

*Ana: And where are your classmates from?*

*Participant: I go to special class so this is only for children from other countries and other backgrounds so it's foreigners. Only foreigners.*

*Ana: Do you speak Swedish with them?*

*Participant: Yes.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

Finally, the third participant that will be quoted in this section is not only living racial segregation in connection to the origins of her classmates, but is experiencing an environment of discrimination and racism. The words of this girl give a panorama of a Gothenburg built with racial or ethnic enclaves.

*Ana: Ahm...How is your school?*

*Participant: I think it's good. I like it there. But many children are being mean to me about my situation as undocumented immigrant.*

*Ana: And how do they know that you don't have papers.*

*Participant: They just know it. I don't know how they heard it from around. There is another kid here who is also looking for asylum here but they don't tease me a lot about it so it's not so much.*

*Ana: They don't tease the other girl but they tease you?*

*Participant: Now they tease both but only sometimes, so not so much.*

*Ana: and how is your relationship with your other classmates, the ones that don't tease you?*

*Participant: I have five friends in my class and the other kids they are nice to me sometimes but sometimes they are mean to me. There are forty students in my sixth grade and we are separated into two classes so there are many kids there. [...]Other undocumented immigrants*

*can come there too. And everybody there is an immigrant in some way so there is like no Swedish people, like ethnically Swedish people.*

*(12 year old girl)*

In the relationship these three participants have built with the adults participating in their own schools, we can identify the remaining two actions that can be analyzed through Corsaro's (2011) interpretative reproduction concept: one action is that it is happening an appropriation from adult's world and at the same time the second action is happening by the contribution to reproduce adult culture within the school setting. Two participants mentioned to have problems or difficulties with at least one teacher. On the other hand they have in general a good relationship with the rest of the teachers and in one case adults are being actively supportive towards the paperless condition of one participant.

*Ana: and what does your teacher do, does she know they do it (we were talking about how some of her classmates tease her for being undocumented)?*

*Participant: aha. The teacher has told them to stop and now the immigration service knows about it and the police knows about it because the principal has reported it. They say that it's racist and that some of the kids have done the Heil Hitler thing so it's been reported to the police.*

*Ana: do you like to go to this school?*

*Participant: Sometimes*

*Ana: And what do you like about it?*

*Participant: I like some of my teachers.*

*Ana: do you have a good relationship with your teachers?*

*Participant: Yeah, I have a good relationship with my teachers except for one. Her name is Amanda and she is very mean and she said to me that I wouldn't pass certain thing at school and that I couldn't say that, so I had to go to the principal and tell her that. And I was really sad and I had to stay home first from school for two days and then I changed class so I am with a different teacher.*

*Ana: do you like the principal of your school?*

*Participant: Yes. He's very strict but I like him. They have several rectorors. One of them is very strict and he is kind of scary but very nice too.*

*(12 year old girl)*

The appropriation from adults' world and the reproduction of their culture is identified by the concepts the girl has acquired in her speech. In the language she uses to express herself within interview it is possible to identify that she has acquired concepts such as racism and the recognition of the breach of her rights. Moreover, she has developed the idea of fighting for the respect of her rights and this is clear when she decided to denounce with the principal the teacher's threat.



A similar scenario of some sort of repression from a teacher is mentioned by another participant, yet he has not had actions for defending his rights as the previous participant:

*Ana: and... how do you get along with your teachers?*

*Participant: with one of them I have a little problem. Her name is Mary. She is not so kind to me. So she...*

*Ana: Is she your teacher?*

*Participant: Yeah. She says all the time "be quiet, be quiet". Even if we are singing all of us, she comes to me and says "Be quiet" always. I don't know why.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

Finally, there is an entirely positive affirmation of a good relationship established between adults in school and one participant by stating: *"They are very good teachers. It's a good environment. I think (19 year old young female adult)."*

In synthesis, school is playing an important element when it comes to children and young adults. They are constructing and reconstructing arrangements with peers while establishing friendships with them and at the same time in some cases experiencing discrimination from them. On the other hand, interactions with adults within the school setting can also be supportive and at the same time some mistreats are identified by some participants.

### **Housing arrangements**

The analysis of this theme brought several positive situations that add new information to the literature review regarding the subject. For instance, one participant has access to a foster family and another one lives with a Swede under comfortable conditions.

Some of the patterns that are the same as previous research has already demonstrated include the conditions of living in small overcrowded spaces and to live in houses and/or neighborhoods where undocumented migrants do not feel entirely safe or secure:

*Ana: Ahm. How is your house? You can draw it if you want.*

*Participant: Okay. It's a little apartment. It's one room and one kitchen and the bathroom.*

*Ana: And how many persons live there?*

*Participant: it's me, my mom and my brother, kid brother.*

*Ana: And how do you feel to live in a small house?*

*Participant: I haven't thought about that because I don't want to think about that.*

*Ana: Mmm... Do you like the neighborhood were you live?*

*Participant: yeah*

*Ana: Do you feel safe in the neighborhood?*

*Participant: This area is not so safe and before I was always scared to be there alone but since I got close to Jesus I don't feel that and I am very brave. Not like myself, so it's not like me but it happened to me that I am very brave now.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

The overcrowded housing conditions for one participant were a very complicated situation that created on her a lot of stress due to fact that she was in the need of sharing a house with persons that she barely knew in advance:

*Ana: ahm. Can you tell me how is your house?*

*Participant: I live with my mother's friend and it's not very nice at all. It smells really bad. This friend's husband or ex-husband was an alcoholic, they are separated now but the [stain/stink/smell] doesn't go away. It smells really bad. And the person that lived before that was some old crazy person who wrote stuff on the wall and it is really ugly and smelly.*

*Ana: So, do you live four people in that house?*

*Participant: No three*

*Ana: The man doesn't live there any more?*

*Participant: yeah, we are four. But she divorced her husband so he doesn't live there, but she has a son, who is an adult but he lives there too. .*

*Ana: do you get along with them?*

*Participant: no*

*Ana: why not?*

*Participant: I don't know them.*

*Ana: Have you been living with them since you came here.*

*Participant: No! It's just been for a few days. I also have this foster family so I'm only at this place sometimes.*

*(12 year old girl)*

The same need to share a house with some other family appears to be less complicated or stressful when the child is still in the asylum process and no negative decision has been taken yet:

*Ana: Now, let's think about your house, your home. How is your home?*

*Participant: is okay*

*Ana: How many persons live there?*

*Participant: We are a family of three, my mom, my dad and me. But it is in an apartment we live and there is two other people: a lady with a child.*

*Ana: And they are... are they your family?*

*Participant: No*

*Ana: do you share the apartment?*

*Participant: Yes*

*Ana: And how do you feel to live with someone else that is not your family?*

*Participant: For me myself is okay, but I don't speak for my mom and dad. It's only me I am talking.*

*A: yes, only you. And do you get along with this other lady and her son or her daughter?*

*Participant: Yes.*

*Ana: And do you like the neighborhood were your house is?*

*Participant: Yes.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

In contrast, two new housing arrangements for undocumented migrants were discovered during the research that were never revealed in the literature review of previous research. The first novel housing arrangement that will be discussed is the access to a foster family as an undocumented child. In addition, this participant showed a firm sense of belonging to the neighborhood where she sporadically lives with her mother while she manages to provide overcrowded housing arrangements to her daughter.

*Ana: Is the foster family a Swedish family?*

*Participant: Aha. Swedes*

*Ana: And, how many days per week do you live with them?*

*Participant: I am almost always at this foster family but on Wednesdays and Thursdays I am with my mother.*

*Ana: and how did you find this family?*

*Participant: It's through the social services because one time I went to the doctor and said that I had tried to kill myself several times. The doctor got worried and sent the... like after that to the social services and I said I could not live with my mother anymore.*

*Ana: was that when you were in the asylum process or after they rejected the papers?*

*Participant: No, this was just in this January, so it is not long ago (this means that she was assigned a foster family 5 months before the interview took place, and in the beginning she had stated that she had been without residence permit in Sweden for 1 or 2 years)*

*Ana: And where do you prefer to live? With the foster family or... do you move around with your mom?*

*Participant: Yeah, my mother has to move around and I don't really like either.*

*Ana: Do you like the neighborhood were you live with the foster family.*

*Participant: No, I don't. They live in (a neighborhood known by its bicultural families). I like it here in (one of the neighborhoods were most of the inhabitants are foreigners).*

*Ana: Do you feel safe in this neighborhood?*

*Participant: Aha*

*Ana: And do you feel safe in the neighborhood were the foster family lives?*

*Participant: No*

*Ana: why not?*

*Participant: I am not familiar with (a neighborhood known by its bicultural families). I have never lived there or been there.*

*Ana: And why do you like this neighborhood?*

*Participant: Because there is many people here and many of them are my friends. And like many people in Gothenburg feels that this is like a dangerous area but I say it is the other way around. It is like a very nice area.*

*(12 year old girl)*

The access of this undocumented girl to services provided by the social services, the same that to persons who even if they have a residence permit but do not have the personal number are denied; is a proof of the willingness of some persons to make reality the rights of every child enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, the experience of this girl is a proof of the capability of the welfare state to provide social security to those persons whose rights

are being violated, by respecting international law to which Sweden has already made a commitment to comply by signing and ratifying the documents.

The second novel housing arrangement that was not found in previous research is to share a house with a Swede under his or her invitation, without being overcrowded, without paying overrated rents by subletting a room because no contract can be signed directly by an undocumented migrant, and to actually have respected the right to decent housing:

*Ana: And what about the housing?*

*Participant: I have, where I have lived in (a city were a migration's camp is) , I have meet one person and maybe I have known him one month and then I have explained to him my story and everything and he have to have in the plan that he should buy the house here in Göteborg. So he said if you will gonna have a problem so come to me and then I will gonna take care of you. So, (laughed) this is what they are friends, to say it like that.*

*Ana: So right now you live with friends.*

*Participant: Yeah*

*Ana: And do you have to pay rent?*

*Participant: No. Nothing*

*Ana: Do you have like enough space for you? Like a room for yourself?*

*Participant: Of course, I have one room so it's big house to say it like that, it's two floors, there is five rooms to say it like that, two toilets and one big living room and kitchen, so...*

*Ana: And do you like living in this place?*

*Participant: Of course, it's better from my country (laughed).*

*Ana: (laughed) And what about the neighbor... the neighborhood where you live? Do you feel comfortable in that neighborhood?*

*Participant: Yeah. Because there is a lot of Swedish person.*

*Ana: And, ahm... how do you, like how are the relationships inside this house? You like to live here, you feel comfortable at this house, you are lucky to live with a friend and you do not have to pay rent. And how do you divide the chores? Who has to do what?*

*Participant: Ash... There is not, not choice because I have say to him that he must nothing do it because I can cook, I've been educated for this. I can clean. He is going to work. It's good relation because he must not say to me "hey do that, and do that or do it", so it's normal conversation like he goes to work at 6 o'clock, so I wake up at 6 o'clock I going to jogging and after that I take care of the house so I clean everything and... so when he comes everything is done.*

*Ana: Ahm... is he a Swede or is he a foreigner?*

*Participant: He's, no, he's Swedish.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

The experience of this last participant puts a lot on the table of discussion. On the one side his housing arrangements could be interpreted as a rise of civil society fighting on a daily basis, without political statements, for the rights of undocumented migrants. The proposal of this Swedish citizen regarding free housing and food could be an inspiring attitude that could become a social movement; and since helping undocumented migrants is not illegal until it is not done for obtaining economic benefits; this type of housing arrangements could be promoted without any

retaliation for those who are making their effort to respect the right of every person to have a house.

The other side of the coin is that the exchange of house and food for chores could become an exploitative relationship where the undocumented migrant could become a sort of slave of the person who is providing these basic needs. This scenario does not seem to be entirely remote if we remember the many stories of domestic workers and child carers that end up being exploited to an almost slavery degree around the world.

### **Interpersonal relationships**

Interpersonal relationships include interactions between the participant and any other person. In a previous section the interactions established inside the school setting were addressed, in this section we will include interpersonal relationships established inside the participant's neighborhoods and in public places while emphasizing the degree of acceptance from the Swedish society.

Scarce mobility within their neighborhood was common in three participants' way to experience their everyday life. The informants describe factors such as lack of mastering the Swedish language, fear of being in public places and even the perception of racism towards them as situations that hinder the participant's mobility and the establishment of interpersonal relationships within their neighborhoods and in general in public places.

A 12 year old boy in the asylum process says:

*Ana: And do you have friends in the neighborhood?*

*Participant: No*

*Ana: Do you go out and play in the playground?*

*Participant: no, never*

*Ana: Why not?*

*Participant: Because I don't have any friends [playmates]*

*Ana: Have you tried to make friends with the neighbors?*

*Participant: No*

*Ana: do you trust in your neighbors?*

*Participant: I think it is two reasons. Is like my Swedish is not so good and the other thing, they don't show that they want to be friends with me so I don't go to them either.*

Interpersonal relationships with neighbors and in with persons in general in public places are also difficult to establish for a 19 year old young female adult:

*Ana: Do you have friends that live in that neighborhood?*

*Participant: The same girl that is close to me (a friend from school), she lives in the same area, so we go together.*

*Ana: Do you trust in your neighbors?*

*Participant: none on them I trust to go and ask for help or something.*

*Ana: Why not?*

*Participant: Is in elevator and we were going up to our apartment and I have met the neighbors in the house in the elevator and they don't... I feel that they reject me and they don't look at me and that I feel very away from them so I don't go to them of course.*

*Ana: Have you tried to reach them?*

*Participant: I always say hi when any of my neighbors if I met them in the stairs or elevator but they don't respond kindly or they don't respond at all, so, but I do it anyway, so, just say hi.*

*Ana: And how does that make you feel?*

*Participant: Sometimes I get very hurt because I know that they don't know me and my character. So why are they responding like this to me is not based on my personality so it hurts me.*

*Ana: And, when you go there (we were talking about going downtown) you are in the middle of many people walking around, right? Do you feel safe there?*

*Participant: I think it's very tough but at the moment I choose to not think but anything but bringing them to salvation, so I just pray.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

The social cohesion of the neighborhoods where the participants live is not enough for providing them with a solid social network. The participants seem to lack in great degree of social capital within their neighborhoods. This situation is reinforced by the fact that the 12 year old girl and the 19 year old young female adult attend schools where racial segregation is happening.

A quite more radical perspective is the one where racial segregation is not being experienced while a participant lives in a neighborhood where Swedes also live, plus he is living with a Swede, and yet what the participant perceives is racism from Sweden and its inhabitants:

*Ana: Have you been able to make friends with the neighbors?*

*Participant: No, I don't like it. Because, they will... the Swedish person are... they have a lot of experience to ask why you are here, where are you from...bla, bla, bla. So, I don't go into this conversation.*

*Ana: Yeah, that could put you into risk.*

*Participant: No, but it's, I can make for myself the problem. Because if they will gonna ask me where are you from, (name of his home country), then maybe this person will gonna work in the migration. Because you never know, so.*

*Ana: Yeah. But other than that, so you have not approached them because you want to protect yourself, but other than that do you feel like they don't want to be close to you?*

*Participant: No, like example the young people, the young people are more comfortable to speak and bla, bla, bla. But it's, it just depends, you have also the old people who they are very racist to say like that. But you have also the young people [...]they are thinking if they don't get the job is because of us who coming from another country and, or if they give someone, somebody like and he will gonna be a Swedish person is because of us who coming from another country, so it's a little bit racist.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

The participant that had been living longer both in Sweden and without a residence permit presents more mobility within her neighborhood and yet the interpersonal relationships that she can establish after school do not show a solid social network:

*Ana: Okay. And then you go to soccer practice after school?*

*Participant: aha. It is not part of the school but I have it after school.*

*Ana: Do you think you have more friends at the soccer training than at school?*

*Participant: No, we are just friends in the football team so we are not like friends outside of that.*

*Ana: But your friends at school are they friends outside school as well?*

*Participant: Yes.*

*(12 year old girl)*

This participant, the 12 year old girl, has two neighborhoods where she can establish interpersonal relationships. One in which she lives with her mother and the other one where she lives with her foster family. There are clear differences regarding how she perceives the availability and friendliness of neighbors between the two neighborhoods in question:

*Ana: do you have friends in the neighborhood where the foster family lives?*

*Participant: no*

*Ana: Do you have friends here (the interview took place in the neighborhood where her mother lives)?*

*Participant: Aha.*

*Ana: with your neighbors?*

*Participant: Aha.*

*(12 year old girl)*

In connection to the participant's social network, racial segregation and participants' confidence to establish interpersonal relationships, it is important to put in discussion the creation of friendships with native Swedes versus foreigners. That is, to highlight who they are mingling with and why are they doing it. The two participants that provided more information regarding their socialization patterns and who they feel comfortable with and why, were the two young adults.

Two opposite manners of establishing friendships were identified. On the one side, one participant has been relating more with non-Swedes. One of the places where she spends many of her after-school time is a church where an international community is welcomed and the common language is English. Moreover, the only friend she recognized from school is the same only friend she has in her neighborhood, being this friend a non-Swede:

*Ana: And your friend, where is she or he from?*

*Participant: Turkey*

*Ana: And why do you think you have a very good relationship?*

*Participant: She is a very happy girl and we started these lessons, this class together, at the same time, not with others. So we got so close. And I think that she understands my emotions and my feelings, all the time. She reads me. So.*

*(19 year old young adult)*

On the other side, the other participant that shared about who he enjoys being with and who he prefers to be friends with expressed a clear interest in actively trying to spend time with Swedes and to make more solid the friendships he has been able to build with Swedes. This relationship with Swedes is present in two ways. On the one side, with some Swedes he finds himself in the need of keeping secret the fact that he does not have a residence permit to stay in Sweden:

*Ana: Do you also go out with his friends (we were talking about the friend he lives with)?*

*Participant: Yes*

*Ana: so you do feel comfortable with Swedes.*

*Participant: Yeah.*

*Ana: And do they know about your situation?*

*Participant: No.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

On the other side, this same participant had been able to make friends with native Swedes while he had been in the asylum process:

*Ana: Okay. And so far your friends are Swedes, like your friend that you live with is Swede. You go out with his friends that are also Swedes. And this girl from (a NGO). She's also Swede.*

*Participant: Yeah.*

*Ana: Have you been able to make any other friends while you have been here (meaning Sweden)?*

*Participant: In this place where I have lived (he referred to a city where he had spent some months in a migration's center) I have a lot of friends but, because I was in the school and I meet some people and bla, bla, bla. I was even to one, not to one person, to a lot of persons at home. And there was all Swedish. They have invited me to food, to join with them. Even one family have called me to go play golf with them sons, so it's good.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

Despite this search for mingling with Swedes, the participant recognizes that even when he is establishing interpersonal relationships with native Swedes by spending time with them, to consolidate a friendship with them has not been easy no matter the degree of commitment that exists from both sides:

*Ana: Okay, so you are making friends now (we were talking about him spending time with a Swedish girl that works for a NGO).*



*Participant: Ahm... she 's not my friend actually. She's one person who take care of me. Like example, she giving me the money every month [like], 900 crowns, because this organization is, is helping to people who hiding themselves.*

*Ana: And... ahm... but you don't think you have like a friendship with her?*

*Participant: Ahm... how do you say friendship? She's like one person who is responsibility for me, like for example to be into touch with me, and, and to know what they doing what they don't doing, if police has take me or no. Or just, she has rights also to fight for me, like to say, like if I will ill she has read my documents and everything and she has sent these documents to one advokat.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

And yet, there is an expressed desire of keep trying to establish interpersonal relationships with Swedes and at the same to not establish them with co-nationals or persons from other nationalities:

*Participant: If I will gonna to stay in the Sweden, for example. I will never be with my... with friends with my people, from my country. Never, ever.*

*Ana: Why not?*

*Participant: Because they will gonna destroy me.*

*Ana: Why do you think so?*

*Participant: Because in my country mm... First everybody is corrupt, criminal. They don't think about future. They live from today, and just today. They don't thinking about tomorrow, so they are thinking like tomorrow it will gonna be like the same but it will not be the same. So I will never be from, friends with somebody from my country, or from another country. I would like to go with Swedish person.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

Another public space where interpersonal relationships are being established is the church. The church is identified to play two roles. On the one side we have a church that is being used as a meeting point where social interaction with other persons was emphasized by the participants in opposition to the spirituality. On the other side there is a church signified as a religious and spiritual support.

The church as a meeting point has allowed two of the participants to make friendships and to create interpersonal relationships with peers:

*Ana: But where did you met, meet them, in the camp (we were talking about Swedes that had invited him to their houses)?*

*Participant: In the church.*

*Ana: In the church. Okay. So, ahm... do you think the church has been, in general, the church has been a good place to meet friends?*

*Participant: Yes*

*Ana: to make friends?*

*Participant: Yes. The church is God's house and the God say everybody is välkommen, to say it like that. So.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

The use of the church as a meeting point began in the asylum process for the aforementioned participant and the one that will be quoted. In some cases this use of the church continues once the asylum seeker has been granted or denied the residence permit:

*Ana: And what do you do in your free time, when you don't go to school, when you are not doing homework?*

*Participant: I help my mom, we shopping for the most the time. And then when mom has a friend we go and visit her sometimes it happens that we go to that lady friend of my mom and then we come to church. We come to church. There is a church in (one day of the week) every children, those most of children who are seek for asylum so they go there. Then in that church I have some kid friends. Is a place where I play with Christian children.*

*Ana: do you like to go there on (one day of the week)?*

*Participant: Yeah [I am] happy. It's okay.*

*Ana: why do you like it there?*

*Participant: I like to play. It's children to play with, so. Because it's lot of people in my age there. It's not like that in all churches so many little guys and girls, yeah. It's lots of foreigners there, but then there is lots of (South Central Asian country) children and you know from (South Central Asian country) and (participant's home country) we speak the same language, so it feels like home playing with the same... yeah.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

Only one participant mentioned the importance of attending church in her free time due to the religious and spiritual response that she obtains from being in this type of religious institution. In fact, the church seems to be a support for establishing interpersonal relationships:

*Ana: Ahm, you said the only places where you feel happy is school and church. What do you do in church? Why do you feel happy here?*

*Participant: I am not lonely anymore here. Is not only because I have lots of friends, sisters and brothers here, spiritual. But is because of the holly spirit I feel so much strong here. I was very sad and stressed before I got baptized and found salvation but since then I feel peace inside even if everything is bad, so.*

*Ana: Ahmm... Besides going to school and coming to church. How do you spend your free time?*

*Participant: Nowhere else because I am in the dance group and worship group in the church. So I come here to practice dancing and worshipping, singing. Then I don't go anywhere else, only school and here. I just go to city in (a public square downtown Gothenburg), you know?, because I am like part of our evangelist group in this church so is the only way I go to city and stand in the middle of the city so, to evangelize.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

The importance of religious institutions as a key part of the social networks of undocumented migrants has been richly studied by authors such as Baguir-Zada (2010). However, I believe the spiritual aspect of attending a religious institution per se was not recognized in the literature review that preceded this research.

## Accessibility to health care

As a fundamental aspect of a person's life, the respect or breach of the participants' right to the access of the highest attainable standard of health was included in this research. The accessibility to health care, in general did not provide information different from what has already been produced by previous researches. Only three participants are included in this section. The twelve year old girl, who is a rejected asylum seeker has full access to health care, as the Law Concerning Health Care for Asylum Seekers and Others establishes:

*Ana: And if you need to go to a doctor, where do you go?*

*Participant: Vårdcentralen*

*Ana: Do you have to pay?*

*Participant: Yeah, 50*

*Ana: And does your mom take you? Does she feel safe taking you to the doctor?*

*Participant: Yeah. She takes me, my mom takes me and we feel safe because the hospitals don't tell anyone that we are there.*

Her words even demonstrate that what previous researchers have emphasized, as Baguir-Zada does (2010) regarding fear to go to hospitals or health care centers, in this girl's particular case is not happening. On the other hand, the accessibility to health care of the two young adults demonstrates the girl's opposite situation.

*Ana: Have you gone to the doctor (referring to the last time she felt sick)?*

*Participant: No.*

*Ana: Why not?*

*Participant: I think, I thought it should go away by itself. It should go away by itself. But, is like this. Because if it's something like this I don't go to doctor because I don't have the opportunity to go to doctor because I don't have permission so this kind of thing should go away by itself, I don't have a choice.*

*Ana: And if it's something more serious?*

*Participant: I pray every day that it won't happen to me. Is not for me to go to doctor here, so I pray.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

Finally, the young male adult not only has the access to public health care denied, but considers that the health care service provided by ngo's, now that he is undocumented, is better than the one provided by the state while he was in the asylum process:

*Ana: Do you feel that your life has changed a lot since you were in the process for receiving or not the asylum and now that it's definitely that you are not getting it?*

*Participant: Yes, actually it has not changed. Is the same. Is the same when was in the process asyl... in the asylum process and now that I'm in hiding. [...]Even like example when it was to dentist, when it was in the asyl process, so he has said that he can not fix my teeth.[...]. And*

*now if I go to the dentist, the church, they are saying that they will gonna fix my teeth, so it's better now with the dentist that when I was the asyl process.*

*Ana: So, you feel the health care system is better the one that is not provided by the state?*

*Participant: Yes, honest.*

*Ana: Have you needed the church in any way in the health care service and have they given you the service?*

*Participant: Yeah, of course. Like example, I have, when I was in the (home country) I get a lot of panic and bla, bla, bla. I'm a little bit down with my nerves so they have give me a medication that can stabil my nerves. For example.*

*Ana: Okay. So the healthcare is better now that you are not in the process.*

*Participant: Yeah.*

*( 26 year old young male adult)*

According to the participants' information, both young adults are not being accepted in the public health care system. The young male has been using health care services provided by ngo's, while the young female expects not to get sick enough for requiring medical attention. The only person that is receiving full access to health care services is the 12 year old girl. In this sense, the law regarding health care for asylum seekers and others is being respected for her.

### **Informal work**

The objective of knowing if the participants are involved in the labor market was to get information regarding working conditions that could be used for a future proposal were public policies can include undocumented migrants' rights not only because they are human beings but also because in some countries they are aiding the host country to develop its economy.

Just one of the four participants has had experiences searching for jobs. His first experience was while he was still in the asylum process and even when he found a job he was not granted a work permit because he was informed he was in the process of being deported to his home country. Later on, as an undocumented migrant he had an experience in an informal work, were he went to similar experiences reported by previous researchers (Gavanas 2010, Khosravi 2010) of exploitation and non-payment:

*Ana: And now that it's over (meaning the asylum process), have you tried again to get a job?*

*Participant: N...You can not get the job*

*Ana: I know, but like, like black jobs*

*Participant: black jobs...*

*Ana: what they call black jobs*

*Participant: Yes I have, but there was like I can, you can work two days, three days. So this is not enough money. It's like 300 or maybe... One guy and when I have worked one day at clean the garden so he doesn't have paid me (laughed).*

*Ana: And ahmm... so you did the whole job and then what did the person say?*

*Participant: The person say come tomorrow I will gonna give you the money. I come in tomorrow he was not there.*

*Ana: And did you try to get the money?*

*Participant: I have tell to my friend but he say I will gonna contact, so. I do not know what happened. I don't, I do not get it. I will not fight for... I will not destroy my life for 300 or 400 crowns. Because...*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

Testimonies like this one can be used to claim for the need for economic rights of undocumented migrants to be respected. These participant's words provide different insights. On the one side he doubted to talk about how he has accessed to informal work, perhaps because he is aware that in Sweden this kind of labour arrangements are not permitted. On the other hand, once he shared his experience in the black market he was clear about not wanting to put his life into risk for money, meaning he preferred to not receive the pay rather than exposing himself by fighting for what he had earned by mowing the lawn.

### **Spatiality in Gothenburg**

As part of participant's every day life I tried to understand the spacial mobility they have within the city of Gothenburg. This section was inspired by Holgersson's (2010) doctoral thesis, which I was only able to read the English summary because the rest of it is published in Swedish. The spatiality of the participants provides an idea of the geographical presence of undocumented persons in Gothenburg. Moreover, I wanted to understand which places seem to be safe and where undocumented persons feel not only a protective environment but enjoy spending their time there and even can have a feeling of belonging.

Still when this mental map is meant to be constructed by the steps of undocumented migrants, I will include the spacial mobility of the child asylum seeker to make a comparison of how similar places change meaning once the migratory status has also changed.

In general, the participant's spatiality in Gothenburg will be divided by their favorite places and their least favorite places in the city where they lived at the moment of the interviews.

There is a marked difference between the favorite places during the asylum process, as a public multicultural place, and once the process is over and their application was rejected, where the participants preferred private places or their own neighborhoods:

*Ana: Where is your favorite place in Gothenburg?*

*Participant: Liseberg (we all laughed).*

*Ana: why?*

*Participant: It's my playground, it's heaven. You just be excited to be there, just hear the names.*

*Ana: Who do you go there with?*

*Participant: My mom, my dad comes sometimes maybe, but my mom.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

A sense of belonging and territoriality can be identified in the answers of the two following participants, where their own neighborhood is their favorite place in all Gothenburg. It is even more interesting to mention that one of the least favorite places in Gothenburg of the boy who is in the asylum process is exactly one of these two neighborhoods:

*Ana: Where is your favorite place in Gothenburg?*

*Participant: (the neighborhood where she lives from time to time with her mom, where she goes to school, and mainly inhabited by immigrants)*

*Ana: Why?*

*Participant: Because I have lived here for most of the time and I always feel safer.*

*(12 year old girl)*

The other participant expressed a similar answer, yet his answer includes fear to other areas of the city.

*Ana: Where is your favorite place in Gothenburg?*

*Participant: Mmm... (a neighborhood where many immigrants live) (laughed), there were I live.*

*Ana: And what does (his neighborhood) have? Why do you like it there?*

*Participant: Ahm... It's, it's not like the centrum. It's not a lot of people. It's not running. And it's quiet and nice and peaceful... to relax. Not to think about something.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

Au contraire to the boy who is still in the asylum process, the young female favorite's place is inside a church. The nineteen year old young female adult prefers to be inside a building where she is not exposed to any of the dangers that the city may represent to her:

*Ana: okay. Where is your favorite place in Gothenburg or (the very close town where she lives)?*

*Participant: This church.*

*Ana: why?*

*Participant: I am safe here. Is peaceful. I feel so close to Jesus here. Because I have learnt that is the most important things in life to be so close to him, so I get it here.*

The other side of the spacial mobility of the participants is obtained by the places were they like the least to go. As before mentioned, the use of the public space seems to change once the asylum process is over. While the only participant who is still in the asylum process does not like the areas were immigrants live, the other participants do not enjoy being in areas were mostly non-immigrants live or in places were too many persons can be found:

*Ana: and where is the... your least favorite place in Gothenburg?*

*Participant: The ghetto part, that there is only foreigners there.*

*Ana: Where is the ghetto part?*

*Participant: I don't remember the name but we were there and I was afraid, so.*

*Ana: Did you use to live there?*

*Participant: no*

*Ana: So, why did you go there?*

*Participant: It was my parents that had some matter there that they had to go and fix it so they took me, I was scared.*

*Ana: do you go there often?*

*Participant: It's two different areas that is very much foreigners. One is (one day a week) I go this place and I think it is little scary. I like it but I don't like it really. But the other part too that the parents must go, maybe buy something but I don't like that either.*

*Ana: What do you feel when you go there?*

*Participant: It is so many people got killed in those areas and I really don't feel safe. I feel scared. I hate it.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

The quite opposite situation is expressed by a girl who has been undocumented for several years:

*Ana: And where is the least place, your least favorite place in Gothenburg?*

*Participant: (she mentioned the neighborhood were she lives with the foster family)*

*Ana: And why there?*

*Participant: Because it's really nice but because I don't know anyone there and it is just white people. They don't want to hang out, they don't want to be friends, they don't want to socialize.*

*(12 year old girl)*

As the participants went older, to be exposed to any people seemed to be enough for not liking a place:

*Ana: And where is the place that you like the least in Gothenburg, where you don't really like to go or where you don't feel comfortable.*

*Participant: I don't know. I don't love to go in the... around where there is a lot of people to say it like that, because where there is a lot of people there is a lot of problem, so I don't like it.*

*Ana: And what do you do for not being in that kind of places?*

*Participant: I stay at home and then I go out just on the night me.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

Only one participant referred to Migrationsverkett as the place where she likes to be the least in Gothenburg:

*Ana: And where is the least place, your least favorite place?*

*Participant: Migration's office. I hate it.*

*Ana: Why?*

*Participant: Because I think there are mean people there, working.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

The areas of Gothenburg where participants expressed to have more mobility and to enjoy these places, are the ones where, in a future research, children and young adults can be called to participate in youth assemblies where they can propose to public policies decision-makers how their rights as undocumented children and young adults could be better respected.

### **Conclusions regarding how is the everyday life of undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden constructed and experienced**

The following section is constructed by an exercise of deductivity and inductivity. I will use the deductive method by applying the theory of symbolic interactionism to the analysis of the results. On the other hand, I will use the inductive method since the analysis of the data has made me use the specific theory of social networks, which is part of the symbolic interactionism, to explain some of the results. Since this area of symbolic interactionism was not considered as a theory with which I intentionally began this research, it is not included in the theories chapter and rather addressed in this chapter.

The construction of everyday life of undocumented children and young adults in Sweden can better be understood through the theory of symbolic interactionism. Social interaction is an “encounter between two or more actors.” In this encounter there is an ongoing “definition and redefinition of the acts of others and one’s own acts.” In its core, social interaction requires that each actor adjusts what other actors do (Charon, 2007:140). And this is what happens every time they encounter someone as well as during the interviews.

Rethinking and interpreting the several different activities that include participants’ everyday life and the diverse areas where they perform on a daily basis, it is important to include from Goffman concepts such as face-to-face interaction, which is understood as “...the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions when in one another’s immediate physical



presence. (Goffman, 1959: 26)”. This is of particular importance while thinking on how participants perceive themselves within Gothenburg and among Swedes and immigrants and how they consider to be perceived.

Moreover, in the execution of performances in everyday life, the performer moves in between regions. According to Goffman a region is “...any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception. Regions vary, of course, in the degree to which they are bounded and according to the media communication in which the barriers to perception occur (Ibidem: 10).” Every section in which the participants’ everyday life was dissected can be identified as a region in between which participants move on a daily basis. In this research we addressed the regions of feelings, housing arrangements, interpersonal relationships, health care, informal work and spatial mobility in the city.

Some of the experiences of their everyday life are understood using an area of social interaction that includes the analysis of social networks. “A social network refers to a set of actors and the ties among them (Felmlee, 2003: 389).” The social network perspective emphasizes the social relations and ties established among the actors (Ibidem). “Networks are composed of intimate, micro-level, dyadic ties, as well as ties to larger subgroups and societal organizations at the macro-level (Felmlee, 2003: 389-390). The function of the social network is to provide social support (Felmlee, 2003: 390).

Felmlee makes a brief definition of concepts important to social networks theory in her analysis of how social networks theory can be used regarding the relationships established among administrative staff members of a university department. From those concepts, three are useful to illustrate how the social network of the participants is working.

The first concept is *size*, which is the “number of distinct individuals in a network (Ibidem: 391). As aforementioned, while analyzing the construction of interpersonal relationships and the housing arrangements of the participants, their social network seems to be rather small and this implies that their social support could be deficient. It is considered to be small because in the housing arrangements the young male depends on one person for guaranteeing a house, the young female’s only access to a house is one where three persons live overcrowded and the boy

who is in the asylum process contacts allow him to share a house with another family. In the case of the 12 year old girl, on the one hand the network built through her mother's acquaintances make her live in shared houses with persons she barely knows; on the other hand the girl does have a bigger network than the other participants because she has been able to enter into Sweden's system by having been granted a foster family through the social services.

Moreover, if we remember how and with whom the interpersonal relationships are being constructed by the participants, in most cases we have again a small network. The young male interacts with several social actors, yet he does not consider having a friendship with most of these Swede and non-Swede persons. The boy who is in the asylum process does not have friends in his neighborhood and even when he enjoys meeting boys and girls on a church once a week he does not feel safe in that neighborhood. The 12 year old girl is involved in activities such as football training and still does not consider being friends with the girls she trains with. Finally, the young female considers to only having one friend even though she is active in different groups in a religious institution.

The second relevant concept is *tie strength*. "Ties between actors that have many links in common are considered "strong," and those with only one or few links are "weak" (Ibidem: 392). In the analysis it was mentioned that in general the participants have weak ties within the social networks they take part of. An exception is the interpersonal relationships established in the church. Weak ties are not necessarily considered a negative aspect of their everyday lives if we take into consideration that Granovetter (1973 cited by Felmeé 2003: 395) explained the importance of weak ties in a social network because they represent an "...important locale for diffusion of influence and information, opportunities for mobility, and community organization". This means that when persons have weak ties among their social networks, there are bigger chances that they will look for opportunities outside their regular social network. A clear example of this is provided by the 26 year old young male adult who was able to obtain a very good housing arrangement with a person that he met while he was in the asylum process.

Finally, the concept of *centrality* is required for the analysis. "A central actor is one who is involved in many ties [...] an actor is considered central if the actor lies between many actors...

(Ibidem: 392)”. If we think on which actor is playing a central role within all participants’ social network the institution of the church arises as the one. Not always in its religious significant, but mostly as a meeting point, in all interviewees the assistance to a religious institution takes part of their everyday lives. In fact, three of the four participants make use of the same religious institution while none of them know each other. This commonality of use of the same church represents its’ centrality and the fact that none of the participants know each other while making use of the same institution represents the small size of their own networks.

The degree of involvement of the participants inside the Swedish society necessarily brings back to the concept of inclusive exclusion used by Gavanas (2010, taken from Khosravi 2010, who quoted Agamben 1998). A social exclusion of undocumented migrants in Gothenburg is not happening, rather the Swedish state and society is regulating and configuring their lives (Agamben 1998, cited in Khosravi 2010). This means that they are being taken into consideration because the state is deciding where they can meet on a regular basis, which persons or institutions can provide them certain services such as medical services, in which areas of the city they can live, etc. None of the participants is living a life of complete solitude. Yet, at the same time none of them demonstrates to feel part of an intercultural society where he or she is accepted no matter his or her migratory status, or the lack of skills for speaking Swedish, or the lack of interest from neighbors (Swedes or foreigners like them) to get to know them as persons.

For instance, the 12 year old girl who has been assigned a foster family does not feel comfortable in the neighborhood where the foster family lives. The young male who has a contact person from a NGO who protects asylum seekers rights does not feel to have a friendship with his Swedish contact person. This same young male who lives with a Swede needs to hide his migratory status from his friend’s friends. The young female who is active in a church and goes to a central park to preach feels uncomfortable while being in the middle of Swedish society.

And again, in many ways the participants of this research are taking active part of the Swedish society. Three of them attend school, two of them have access to health care, one of them even has been included by the social services by being assigned a foster family, and the four of them

make use of religious institutions for spiritual and socialization means. Regardless, none of them is recognized as citizen of Sweden.

### ❖ DESIRE OF CHANGE

As part of undocumented children's and young adults' everyday life, it was important to know which aspects of their everyday life they want to be different in order to have a better life in Sweden. From their responses I assume that the aspects that they mentioned are fundamental to take into consideration to modify rules, regulations and social actions to create an environment where children's rights are respected no matter the migratory status of the child in question.

Moreover, to ask children themselves instead of taking decisions from experts' points of view or adults responsible of the children is part of a participatory exercise where articles 12 and 13 of the CRC are being not only respected but put into practice. Both articles are related to the rights of expressing their own opinions, to be heard and to look for, receive and disseminate information.

The following interview excerpts will give answer to the second research question: Which aspects of their everyday life, and why, would they like to be different in order to have their children's rights respected?

Three of the participants identify that what they want to change from their everyday life has to do with changing their condition of non- citizenship, of not having a permission to stay in Sweden. This seemed to be their priority if they could choose anything that could change in their present life:

*Ana: What would you change today in your life in Sweden?*

*Participant: Aha. I would change the migration's office decision for us (laughing).*

*Ana: But they haven't decided yet, right?*

*Participant: Okay. Then I wish something else for you.*

*Ana: No! Wish for you (laughing) for you.*

*Participant: I would change this thing that I am away from my closest friends.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

This desire does not change once a negative decision for granting the asylum has been received:

*Ana: If you could change something from your life in Sweden, what would you change?*

*Participant: To get asylum and get personal number and an apartment, somewhere to live.*

*(12 year old girl)*

The distress of not having a residence permit is clearer in the following participant's words, were she can not conceive a future without having a residence permit. Her future will begin once she has the peace of having a residence permit:

*Ana: From your life in Sweden, what would you like to be different?*

*Participant: It's like, I came here to be free. I live free but I am not free because the Migration office is deciding for me and is very scary situation, so I just want to have this peace, to know that I can stay, so that's enough for me.*

*Ana: what you want could happen... To have this peace, how could you have his peace?*

*Participant: I have prayed and I know inside my heart that Jesus has made this permission for us but the time hasn't come yet so I know that we will receive it some day. That day, I don't know when it is but we will be ready for that day and because of that I don't think of future because future begins with that day. I can not touch it now, so I don't plan now.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

The only participant that did not focus on obtaining a residence permit as a factor of change of his everyday life desired a social change regarding how, according to his perception, the Swedish society relates with and takes care of old people.

It is clear that a first necessity of change in everyday life identified by most participants is the safety of having been granted a residence permit. Nonetheless, their perceptions include other social rights such as being close with their friends, a decent house and livelihood, mental health and social cohesion.

All these aspects are included in the CRC where article 22 states the rights of children, who are seeking for asylum, article 24 states the right for the highest attainable standard of health, article 39 states the right to physical and psychological recovery while previous experience in i.e. armed conflicts, article 27 states the right to an adequate standard of living for the child's development.

## ❖ FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

To talk about future expectations was interesting and complicated at the same time. The importance of a projection into the future is because from these expectations social policies can be designed by decision- makers. Most participants had some idea of their life project, while one

participant reinstated that future is somewhere frozen until her situation is not regularized. Feelings of happiness, safety, fight, mutual aid and tiredness are part of the following section.

The excerpts that are included in this section answer the third research question: What are the future expectations of undocumented children and young adults in Gothenburg, Sweden?

Two participants agreed in wanting to stay in Sweden and to want to help other persons by executing their life projects:

*Ana: Okay, What do you see in your future?*

*Participant: I don't know, maybe become policewoman or doctor, but I don't know.*

*Ana: and why to be a policewoman?*

*Participant: To help people.*

*Ana: and a doctor?*

*Participant: To save peoples lives. My father wish before he died was that I could be a doctor.*

*Ana: if you could choose a country to live, where would you like to live?*

*Participant: Sweden.*

*(12 year old girl)*

The following participant provided a much more elaborated life project. In general he has the same background idea as the previous girl regarding to stay in Sweden and do something to help other persons.

*Ana: what are your expectations for the future?*

*Participant: If I will gonna stay in Sweden, I will gonna go to educate me better and to make a [unintelligible] because I've been young and the year going very fast so I will gonna try to make something what is good for me and my family and just that. I would like to be a chef, so [unintelligible] myself I think if I will gonna stay in Sweden I will gonna to some education one year just to grow a lot of theoretic and after that I will gonna to work in some restaurant maybe two years. But after that I will gonna stay of my own food so I will gonna open my own restaurant and I will gonna take care of others.*

*Ana: Take care of others?*

*Participant: Ahm... yeah of others. Like example I see here is in the Sweden it's a lot of old people. And they have maybe children but these children they are so young and not educated so they don't get about the parents.*

*Ana: And if you can't stay in Sweden?*

*Participant: (sighed)*

*Ana: Like that's one option.*

*Participant: Mmm...*

*Ana: Do you have any other options in your life?*

*Participant: Just to fight.*

*Ana: Fight to stay here?*

*Participant: No, just to fight through my life. Because I don't know what will gonna happen tomorrow, if they will gonna catch me, the police if will gonna catch me they will gonna send me, they will gonna deport me to my country. [...] I will gonna start to fight for a new life, to better situation.*

*Ana: Ah... if they would send you back to (home country), would you stay there? Or you would try to...*

*Participant: No stay there... because my future is there death to say it like that.*

*(26 year old young male adult)*

The boy that is still in the asylum process sees in his future a residence permit coming and with that the happiness of his parents coming back. His life project is thought in a short term were his immediate needs are covered, without projecting himself into subsequent years.

*Ana: What do you expect from Sweden?*

*Participant: We get permission and we stay here is my biggest dream. I have to think. It was a difficult question. If I get permission then I can have many, many, many animals and take care of them.*

*Ana: And how does it feel to be waiting to get the permission?*

*Participant: So difficult to wait. Not because I am sad but because everything you want to do they say you don't have permission, you can not do it, so you have to wait. Because I ask my parents I want to have a dog. I have always had animals, many animals, at home. But now they say: Oh we have so little money, so the dogs are very expensive. Everything must go to dogs and it's not good.*

*Ana: and how do you think your life will be different once you get the permission?*

*Participant: It will be completely different (laughing). I can buy. I can have dogs and animals. The most important thing, my parents will be happy again. If they get happy then it will be like before, so many years ago that they were happy. So it will be like the home I came.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

On the other hand, the fourth participant seems to have unclear or uncertain future expectations because she can only focus on her present and to construct future expectations appear as something that might as well never happen:

*Ana: What are your expectations for the future?*

*Participant: I have some sentence ready everyone asks me I just answer I want to be engineer but I really don't see that but I just answer in the school and everybody.*

*Ana: And what do you see, what do you really see in the future?*

*Participant: At some point it was my dream to become an engineer but I see that so far away. So inside me I know I never will be. They will never let me to go to school or high school and university so I shouldn't, I should learn not to think like that.*

*Ana: And, then how do you think it's going to be in the future?*

*Participant: I'm in some kind of situation I have to think about today that they don't send me away today. I stay here today, not so far. So it's just okay to survive and stay here, for the moment. I say to my friend that I must be the only person in the world who hates the future. Maybe future never comes. It's like good here because now I'm here I don't know about the future, so it's scary. I had so much expectation for the future but that future hasn't come, may never come so I am tired of future, I don't like this word.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

In general, the future expectations expressed by the participants are another example of the inclusive exclusion in Swedish society they are being part of. They have dreams and expectations yet all of them depend on how the Swedish state can fully include them or keep them in this sort of semi inclusion were they don't die of starvation, yet they don't take part of the banquet.

## Chapter 5 – Conclusions

This research with undocumented children and young adults has provided a panorama regarding how they are experiencing their everyday life in a Northern European city. While not having a regular migratory status they are still being present in different settings where interpersonal relationships are being established with both Swedes and foreigners.

Everyday life of undocumented and young adults in Gothenburg includes feelings such as fear and resentment, schooling experiences, different kinds of having access to a house, inclusive exclusion when it comes to building interpersonal relationships within the Swedish society, a marked difference in the access to health care depending on the age of the participant and in the particular case of these participants, a very low exposure to informal or black jobs.

It is of great satisfaction that while some of the results of this research agree with previous research findings, there are also new findings that are an example of how an intercultural society that respects all people's human rights is possible. On the one hand, similarities with previous research provide a sense of congruence between this research and work developed with other groups. On the other hand, to have new findings reinstates the pertinence of making research directly with children and young adults. This is particularly mentioned because the research demonstrated that efforts for constructing an intercultural society are coming both from civil society and from the Swedish state. The clearest examples are the possibility for the young male to live with a Swede under his invitation and the social services assigning the 12 year old girl a foster family.

The results obtained in this research are product of performing research with children and young adults under a rights perspective. The application of these results could be used for concretizing two of the objectives that the research originally had and that became unachievable. These objectives were:

- Convert children's and young adult's own perspectives into structural solutions such as the construction of a transnational citizenship and an intercultural Swedish society.



- Formulate a proposal of full access to children's rights and respect of the rights enshrined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of undocumented children in Sweden.

Future research could certainly work towards these two objectives in order to guarantee that Sweden, and many other countries that have undocumented migrant children and young adults within their boundaries, can provide all the rights that international instruments of the United Nations guarantee to persons in transit.

I highly recommend cross-cultural research because inclusive, participatory and rights based research can not obviate the presence of multiple ethnic groups in all countries that are transit or destinies in the migratory process. In this kind of research is important to have cultural sensitivity and to make the best effort to speak the language of the country or the participant's mother tongue. If none of this possible, interpreter aided interviews is a very good tool to perform inclusive interviews and to promote intercultural societies.

The final words of this thesis must belong to those four persons that made all this possible. I asked each of them if there was anything about their life they wanted to be part of a movie or to inspire a story. The meaning of this is what they would leave as legacy of their life. Each of them shared with me what I consider to be a resumé of what their life of asylum seekers or rejected asylum seekers has been about. Moreover, it is the final statement of how valuable their life is and how worthy was this research for me:

*(laughing and happily excited) I want to write a story about the things happened to us when we came to Sweden and we couldn't speak Swedish and we were in different shops and everything went wrong, and everything we bought was wrong, we could not do anything right. It would be very funny story. So I would like to write this funny story so people love it.*

*(12 year old boy in asylum process)*

*Ahm... Very nice question. You made me think about this thing because I love to write and I think I will probably do that in a very short while because I have, my story is very painful and very long from childhood and I have been in different situations. It has been very tough. It will be very good story. Maybe many people wants to read it and I want to tell people how I thought and now I have learnt to think when I met Jesus everything was changed in my mind and my heart. So, no matter problems, I can find the solution so it's good to write about this for other people too.*

*(19 year old young female adult)*

*I am actually writing with my psychologist a story now about everything that has happened in my life up until now.*  
*(12 year old girl)*

*My whole life. Because my whole life is... my father has died when I was one year. So I have grown up in the children's house, children's home. So it was, it was hard for me all my life and they know how it is. I'm gonna to make the story from that if I will gonna to be in the possibility and it will gonna be like Titanic (laughed).  
(26 year old young male adult)*

## Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Presentation and explanation of the research.

Informed consent.

Personal data

- Pseudonym
- Country of origin
- Age
- Their history? For how long has he/she stayed in Sweden?

Your day

Could you describe an “ordinary” day?

Feelings and thoughts connected to different chores and activities.

Education. Description of 1 day in school. Clarify if:

- Could you describe your school day? How is it to go this school? Likes or not school – why? What is good, what is not so good?
- Relationship with classmates
- Relationship with friends
- Relationship with teachers/adults in school
- Feels safe? – Why?

Health care. Description of the last time he or she got sick. Clarify if:

- Accessed to public health care system/other e.g. Rosengrenska
- Payment
- Felt safe? – why?

Housing. Description or Drawing (depending on age). Clarify:

Could you describe your home?

- How is it to live in this home?
- Intrafamily relations ( his or her chores and the chores of the rest of the family)
- How is it to live in this neighborhood? –What do you like, what don't you like?
- Relationship with neighbors
- Feels safe in the neighborhood?

Work. Description of 1 day of work (paid/unpaid work outside the household). Clarify:

- How is it to do this job? – Likes it or not? – Why?
- Relationships with employer
- Relationships with co-workers
- Paid job: how do you use the money you earn? Remittances?

Free time. Description of leisure time.

- How do you spend your free time?
- Where do you go?
- Who do you spend it with?

Spatial presence in Gothenburg. **Drawing or conversation**

- Where is your favorite/least favorite place in Gothenburg?
- How come?
- What do you do there?
- Who do you go with?
- How often do you go?

Self – Representation. Present or Past

- Is there any event in your life you think you could write a story about?

Future expectations.

- What are your expectations for the future?
- From your life in Sweden, is there anything you would like to be different? How come?
- How could this happen?
- How do you see yourself in the future?

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