

'Becoming Adult' in the Netherlands as a Refugee. Experiences and Expectations.

Master Thesis International Development Studies



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ABSTRACT

The number of unaccompanied minor refugees that come to the Netherlands is increasing. Because they are still minors when they apply for asylum, different rules and laws apply to them. Till they reach the age of 18, they are under the responsibility of the Dutch government. From the moment unaccompanied minor refugees turn 18, they are seen as an adult and lose all forms of support. Earlier research has primarily been focused on the problems that unaccompanied refugees experience once they turn 18. But little attention has been paid yet to how they tend to overcome these challenges and turn them into something positive later in their life, also known as resilience. Therefore, this qualitative research aims to explore what changes occur once unaccompanied minor refugees turn 18 and which resilience strategies they develop based on these changes later in their life during emerging adulthood. To answer the research question mentioned above, semi-structured interviews with UAMs between 18 and 25 were conducted. In addition to this, participatory observations were conducted. Findings of this research confirm that there appear primarily economic and social changes for unaccompanied minor refugees once they turn 18. Whereby applying for student finance and losing their social support system are the most impactful measures. Despite these problematic situations, unaccompanied minor refugees have the ability to develop resilience strategies to overcome these setbacks. Learning Dutch, creating a social support system around them, and having the ability to learn from difficult moments in their life are the three most common strategies. Which enable them to develop themselves during emerging adulthood and to become adult.

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Index

- List of figures and tables..... 6
- List of abbreviations 7
- 1. Introduction..... 8
 - 1.1 Problem statement..... 8
 - 1.2 Research objectives and knowledge gap 10
 - 1.3 Thesis structure 11
- 2. Literature review 12
- 3. Theoretical framework..... 19
 - 3.1 Emerging adulthood – characteristics..... 19
 - 3.2 Resilience strategies 23
- 4. Conceptual framework..... 27
 - 4.1 Conceptual discussion 27
 - 4.2 Conceptual framework..... 29
- 5. Geographical context 30
- 6. Methodology 35
 - 6.1 Operationalization of variables 35
 - 6.2 Research Methods..... 37
 - 6.3 Primary data collection 37
 - 6.4 Identification of the target group and selection criteria..... 38
 - 6.5 Sampling strategy 38
 - 6.6 Semi-structured interviews 39
 - 6.7 Participatory observations 40
 - 6.8 Reflection and limitations of the research 41
- 7. The experiences of Emerging Adulthood 43
 - 7.1 Identity exploration 43
 - 7.2 Instability 44
 - 7.3 Self-focus 45
 - 7.4 Feeling in-between..... 46
 - 7.5 Possibilities/optimism 46
- 8. The impact of changing policies once turning 18..... 48
 - 8.1 Social impacts 48
 - 8.2 Economic impacts..... 50
 - 8.3 Cultural impacts..... 51

9. Structural barriers during the transition to adulthood	53
9.1 Language.....	53
9.2 Social network	53
9.3 Racism.....	55
10. Resilience among unaccompanied minor refugees	56
10.1 Learn the language	56
10.2 Help of a support system	57
10.3 Learn from difficult moments	57
11. Discussion	59
11.1 Economic, social and cultural changes once turning 18	59
11.2 Structural Barriers	60
11.3 Resilience strategies	61
11.4 Reflection: influence of biases	61
11.5 Reflection in the field of Development Studies	62
11.6 Implications for further research	62
12. Conclusion	64
12.1 Policy recommendations	65
Bibliography.....	66
Appendix 1: Interview guide	77
Appendix 2: Interview guide with expert.....	82
Appendix 3: Code trees	84

List of figures and tables

List of tables

Table 1: Operationalization of variables

Table 2: Operationalization of the variables: the four capitals

List of figures

Figure 1: First-time asylum applicants in the EU Member States

Figure 2: Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied children

Figure 3: Key elements of the best interests of the child

Figure 4: Multi-layered Social Resilience Framework

Figure 5: Conceptual model

Figure 6: Process of access to shelter in the Netherlands

List of abbreviations

COA	Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers
ISK	International Transition Class
MBO	Post-secondary vocational education
NDC	New Dutch Connections
UAM	Unaccompanied minor
UASC	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

1. Introduction

For many young people, turning 18 is a moment to look forward to. In many countries, including the Netherlands, you get much more freedom. From the moment you turn 18, you have the right to vote and get your driver's license (PICUM, 2022). This situation could not be more opposite for unaccompanied minors in the Netherlands. For them, there is not much to celebrate. Becoming eighteen as an unaccompanied minor in the Netherlands means that from then on, you should be able to stand on your own feet (Nationale Ombudsman, 2022). But how difficult is this when there is no support system, you do not speak Dutch and must do all this in a foreign country? Practice shows that this is a brutal shock for children who are on their own from the day they turn 18 (Oxfam, 2021).

Since 2015, the Netherlands and other European countries have experienced an increasing inflow of refugees (CBS, n.d.). A refugee is someone who has an international border in search of protection in another country after fleeing war, violence, conflict, or persecution (UNHCR, n.d.). One-third of the refugees who arrived in recent years are children (Unicef, n.d.). Among this group, there are children who made this long journey to the Netherlands on their own. Because they are still under the age of 18 when they arrive, they have more rights compared to adults. They have the right and access to education, a guardian, and housing (UNHCR, n.d.). The harsh reality, as has been written above, is that these children lose all these rights when they turn eighteen. Therefore, this thesis will be focused on the experiences that Unaccompanied minors (UAM) had when they arrived in the Netherlands and how their life changed when they turned 18.

1.1 Problem statement

This research looks at the resilience strategies of young refugees in the Netherlands and their individual experiences and stories. Policy plans are often designed without paying much attention to how they can change someone's life positively or negatively (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019). This research will especially pay attention to the personal stories of young refugees. It will give an insight into how UAMs in the phase of emerging adulthood experience this sudden change that comes forth out of national policy.

“Empirical research into the resilience construct has still been criticized for lacking social, cultural, and contextual sensitivity.” (McAdam-Crisp, 2006, p.459)

As the above statement shows, empirical research on this topic lacks social, cultural, and contextual sensitivity. In this research, the contextual and social aspects of the respondents will be considered and will be included during the data collection and will be included in the analysis.

In addition, there are several other reasons why this topic is important. Firstly, in most cases, when people talk about this subject, people's personal and individual stories are left behind. Secondly, the media and policies mainly highlight the negative side of migration processes and the refugee crisis. Therefore, this thesis will focus on the individual stories of ex-unaccompanied minor refugees who came to the Netherlands on their own and who managed to turn the setbacks they experienced once they turned 18 into something positive later in their lives. The willpower and resilience among this powerful group of young people come forth. In this way, this research tries to shed light on the positive sides of migration and the enormous will of this group to make the best of their life.

For this research, the concept of resilience is used to find out how UAMs in the Netherlands overcome economic, social, and cultural changes once turning 18. The following definition for the term resilience is used; the process and result of effectively adjusting to harsh or demanding life situations, mainly via mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal pressures (American Psychological Association, n.d.). As mentioned earlier, examples of resilience strategies to overcome setbacks are focusing on school or working hard (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010). This research aims to find out which social, economic, and cultural changes affect unaccompanied minor refugees the most once they turn in 18 years old in the Netherlands and which resilience strategies they develop to cope with these changes in their life. To achieve this, the following research question has been formulated: ***What dimensions shape the life of unaccompanied minor refugees in the Netherlands once they turn 18 years old and what resilience strategies do they develop during emerging adulthood?***

To answer this research question, the focus of this thesis will first lie on the economic, social, and cultural dimensions that shape the life of UAMs once turning 18. Secondly, the focus lies on the resilience strategies that UAMs develop based on these changes once turning 18. Finally, it will be analyzed how these changes once turning 18 interrelate with the resilience strategies that UAMs develop during emerging adulthood. To get an answer to the main question, the following sub-questions have been formulated:

Sub questions:

- How do UAMs experience the period of emerging adulthood in the Netherlands?
- What consequences do UAMs experience because of the changes in policies once they turn eighteen years old?
- What are the structural barriers that UAMs face as they transition from youth to adulthood?
- What do UAMs do to overcome the obstacles they face during emerging adulthood?

1.2 Research objectives and knowledge gap

This research will contribute to the debate on the transition to adulthood for refugees in the Netherlands. In recent years much research on this topic has been done. Many of these researches are European-wide and focus on policies and practices in the European Member States. Besides the recent attention to this topic in the academic field on a European level, more research is also being done in the Netherlands recently. One of the most recent researches is one of the "Nationale Ombudsman" (2022), released in May of this year. After the publication, many media and news websites reported the problems and prominent issues that UAMs experience once they turn 18. Even though considerable research has already been done on the topic, this research will contribute to the current literature because it will also look at the resilience strategies of UAMs during emerging adulthood. Therefore, it shines a positive light on the willpower and resilience of this young group of people, which is often under the light in the media. Besides, this research adds to the current literature because only a few studies have examined the phenomenon of resilience among young refugees (Sleijpen, Mooren, Kleber, & Boeije, 2017).

The objective of this research is to find out which resilience strategies unaccompanied minor refugees develop based on the many changes in their life once they turn 18 in the Netherlands. As the introduction above already showed, several universal changes happen to unaccompanied minor refugees in the Netherlands once they turn 18. Research has already shown that these specific changes can significantly impact the lives of unaccompanied minor refugees (Pasic, 2020).

Other research has also already shown that resilience among refugees is often high, despite the difficult situation that most of them are in (Mateos Rodriguez & Dobler, 2021; Chernet, Labhardt, & Pfeiffer, 2018). In this thesis, the connection will be made between the difficult time that many minor refugees experience once they turn 18 years old and how this transition affects their resilience strategies later in life during emerging adulthood—also known as the period between the age of 18 and 25 wherein people grow into adulthood. Academically, this research aims to contribute to the current debate in the Netherlands and broader European discussion on the transition to adulthood for refugees.

1.3 Thesis structure

The first part of the thesis presents a literature review of the current European policies regarding the transition to adulthood among refugees. Chapter three includes a theoretical framework where the concepts of resilience strategies and emerging adulthood will be further explained. This is followed by chapter 4, which presents the conceptual framework. Chapter 5 describes the geographical context, followed by chapter 6, where the research methodology is presented. The second part of this thesis gives an overview of all the results from the participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and policy documents. The discussion follows in the following chapter and analyses and interprets the results based on the conceptual framework and literature presented in chapter three. As last, the research question will be answered in the conclusion chapter.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The number of people that came to Europe has been rising since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011 (European Commission, n.d.). In 2021, the number of first-time asylum applicants in the European Member States even grew by 28% in comparison with the year before (European Commission, 2022). Among the people who were seeking asylum in 2021, 183.600 people were under the age of 18 and nearly 13 percent were unaccompanied children (European Commission, n.d.). It is important that there is a European-wide protocol to manage this flow of refugees. Throughout the years' different policies and protocols have been introduced and maintained. Firstly, this literature review will show an overview and critical analysis of various policies in the European Union over the last decades. Secondly, the impact of these policies on unaccompanied minor refugees will be given based on various analyses and opinions of scholars and researchers in the field. Before further discussing the challenges and problems regarding the transition to adulthood, it is essential to define the term unaccompanied child. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees uses the following definition:

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“An unaccompanied child is a person who is under the age of eighteen, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is, attained earlier and who is “separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so.” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1997)

2.2 European policies: an overview

In the late 1990s, a unified asylum system was introduced in the European Union. The system was introduced to harmonize procedures and strengthen collaboration between states in the European Union (Lindstrom, 2005). Different scholars have criticized these policies. Most of this critique is about the normalization of discrimination and exclusionary practices. Young people and children are experiencing these forms of discrimination the most (Ucarer, 2001; Watters, 2007; Düvell, 2009). In the following paragraphs, an overview will be given of the

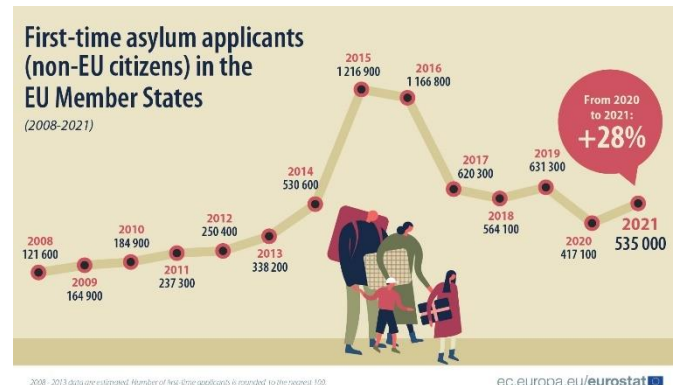


Figure 1: First-time asylum applicants in the EU Member States (European Commission, 2022)

challenges and problems that occur during the transition to adulthood among minor unaccompanied refugees, according to different scholars.

In 2015, 95.000 UAMs came to Europe. This was during the peak of the refugee crisis. This is visible in figure 2. The European Member States were not prepared for this large inflow of refugees and could not provide these people with the assistance they needed and where they had the right to at that moment. The policies were compiled in response to this unexpected flow of

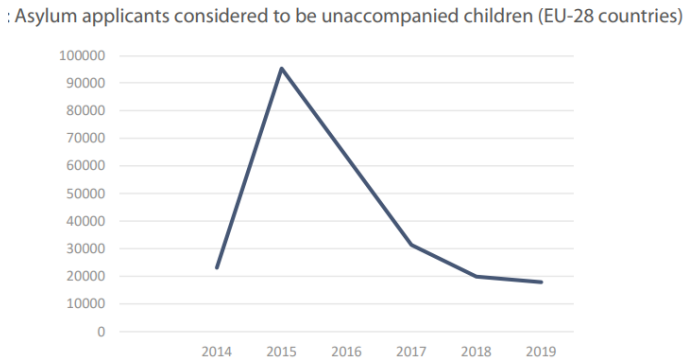


Figure 2: Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied children (EU-28 countries) (Eurostat, 2022)

refugees, and they affected, and still do affect, the lives of many asylum applicants in the European Union. These policies significantly impact the lives of young adults (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019). In 2010, the Council of Europe’s Youth sector already stated that young refugees and asylum seekers between the ages of 18-30 are a group that requires specific treatment and needs in society (UNHCR & Council of Europe, 2010). Another meeting in 2011 between the Council of Europe and UNHCR confirmed this point of view. There should be special attention to policies, laws, and practices for this transition to adulthood. According to the Council of Europe, this is especially important because a young person's life is drastically altered as they become adults regarding social expectations or duties. Becoming an adult is complex on many distinct levels and emotionally taxing for everyone. This transition is especially difficult for young refugees and asylum seekers. Mainly because of their personal development and the requirement to learn how to function in a different culture and country (Shalayeva, 2011). Even though the number of UAMs who came to Europe was significantly rising, there was no European- wide framework or policy on how to deal with the situation, according to Hammarberg (2010). According to Parusel (2017), the European Union had been focussing on a united approach to different topics related to migration, such as visas and asylum procedures. Still, less attention was paid to the situation of UAMs.

Some efforts have been made to improve the situation of UAMs. In 2010, as a reaction to the growing number of UAMs who came to the European Member States, an “Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors” was composed. It stated that even though more attention had been

paid to the situation of UAMs, an improvement in the cooperation between the European Member States was necessary. Issues that were presented varied from improving efforts to trace family members of UAM to better and more suitable accommodation specialized for children (European Commission, 2010). Parusel (2017) states that these initiatives and improvements regarding the protection of this vulnerable group have considerably impacted policies and, eventually, the wellbeing and lives of UAM. Nevertheless, many issues are still not addressed enough, for example, the forced return in case of asylum applications that are denied or education opportunities (Parusel, 2017).

2.3 The need for durable solutions

The goal of the European Union is to find durable solutions for this group that also comply with “the best interest of the child” (O' Donnell & Kanics, 2016). The key elements of the best interests of the child are visible in figure 3 (Nordic Welfare Centre, 2020). Researchers and advocacy groups support this. Rather than proposing piecemeal changes addressing specific areas of entry and asylum procedures, EU policymakers should concentrate more on developing "durable solutions" for UAMs. "Durable solution" refers to a situation in which UAMs are protected and are allowed to grow into adults in a setting that effectively satisfies



Figure 3: Key elements of the best interests of the child (Nordic Welfare Centre, 2020)

their rights and needs. Such a strategy would necessitate the EU to develop and implement outcomes that might not be apparent in the context of immigration limitations. However, such an approach cannot readily be included in the current directives and rules as this would need pragmatism and flexibility. Instead, it calls on the EU to develop new strategies for member-state cooperation (Parusel, 2017).

It is not only essential to integrate these durable solutions into policies, but also to integrate this into practices across the European Member States (O' Donnell & Kanics, 2016). Pasic (2020) recognizes that there is a gap between the current European regulations and local

policies and practices. This includes, for example, the unavailability of protection services, which should be arranged based on European policies. Other critics point out that not all Member States apply the rules and regulations regarding fair treatment for people who request refuge. Even though the European Commission has established minimal requirements for the reception of UAMs, many member states fail to uphold these procedures (European Commission, 2016; UNICEF, 2018).

The paragraphs below present an overview of the most critical shortcomings and flaws of the current European policies regarding UAM and their transition to adulthood.

2.4 Importance of policies

As described above, different guidelines were used to find international policies and regulations regarding UAM. International guidelines are crucial for children because of their special status. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as: “persons below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger” (United Nations, 1989). Different laws protect children under the age of 18. This started with the UN Convention on the rights of the child in 1989 and was later expanded by additional UNHCR documents on an international level (UNHCR, 1994). Article 25 of the EU Asylum Procedure Directive is one of the regulations whereby special attention to the risk and vulnerability of this group is brought under attention.

In recent years more attention has been paid to protecting this vulnerable group in the European Union (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2021). Since 83 percent of the refugees who arrived in Europe were under 35, 32 percent were under 18 (Eurostat, 2021). The number of unaccompanied minors who arrived in European countries has been growing since 2010. In 2019, 14.000 unaccompanied minors registered for asylum (Eurostat, 2021). Therefore, it is no surprise that more attention had to be paid to this large group of refugees.

Even though the legal frameworks and laws are widely acknowledged in European member states, practice shows that the problems faced by UAMs who become 18 are largely neglected (Lyamouri-Bajja, UNHCR, & the Council of Europe Youth Department, 2014). According to Bajja (2014), it is recognized that many changes in the policy field appear for children who turn 18. But, the transition to adulthood is shaped by many other factors, such as social, economic and cultural changes (Lyamouri-Bajja, UNHCR, & the Council of Europe Youth Department, 2014).

2.5 Lack of frameworks

There is currently no European-wide special legal framework or safeguard in place for this group of young unaccompanied and separated asylum seekers and international protection for refugees who have just turned 18 (Lyamouri-Bajja, UNHCR, & the Council of Europe Youth Department, 2014). Practices regarding the transition to adulthood differ between the European Member States. Sometimes even within countries. In Austria and the Netherlands, unaccompanied minor refugees lose their social workers and receive less support from this moment. In Sweden, the age where someone reaches majority is when they turn twenty-one, this is also the case for unaccompanied minor refugees who apply for asylum here (Pasic, 2020). Pasic (2020) states that there is a need for consistent frameworks regarding guardianship to protect the rights of the child. Especially in this transition period in their life.

2.6 Access to accommodation

The conditions of the reception when UAMs arrive in the European Member States do not only impact their wellbeing but also their access to an efficient asylum procedure. This is especially the case for vulnerable groups like UAM, who are in their transition to adulthood (Lyamouri-Bajja, UNHCR, & the Council of Europe Youth Department, 2014). The accommodations at reception are different for most of the European Member States. UAMs are housed at receiving centres in Austria before being eventually put in households through a centralized system that finds a place based on availability in the federal regions. When they turn 18 years, young adults are moved to adult facilities. Firstly, this can be problematic because they lose all the support from that moment on. Secondly, moving from facilities often means moving to a remote part of the country, forcing these young adults to give up the social networks they build over time. In France, the reception system for UAMs is insufficient, mainly because of overcrowded facilities. Besides these poor conditions regarding accommodation in both European Member States, more positive voices are heard from UAM who apply for asylum in Sweden. The State is responsible for young unaccompanied children till they reach the age of twenty-one. Furthermore, they are placed in special homes, receiving support during their transition to adulthood (Lyamouri-Bajja, UNHCR, & the Council of Europe Youth Department, 2014). These examples show that the accommodation for UAM differs in most European Member States. The geographical context chapter will further explain the current situation regarding housing in the Netherlands.

2.7 Access to education

While different studies show that there is much attention to UAMs basic needs such as shelter, safety, and food when it comes to procedures. Less attention, on the other hand, is paid to social support and educational guidance (De Graeve & Bex, 2017; Oppedal, Guribye, & Kroger, 2017; Pastoor, 2015). According to article 14 of the EU Reception Conditions Directive, children have the right to primary and secondary education, acknowledging that the integration and transition process is made easier due to education. In reality, language obstacles, prior educational levels, bureaucracy, prejudice, and especially if they are of the obligatory education age, make it difficult for children to obtain an education at both the elementary and secondary levels of education (Pasic, 2020). Besides these failures in the current system, there are also signs of positive developments. For example, in many countries, apprenticeships have been shown to be suitable for easing the transition from education to the job market (Pasic, 2020).

2.8 Access to health care and psychological support

Compared to the general population, refugee children and adolescents experience more mental health issues (El Baba & Colucci, 2018; Hodes, Jagdev, Chandra, & Cunniff, 2008). According to several studies, 41 and 69 percent of UAMs report mental health issues (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Jakobsen, Demott, M.A.M, & Heir, 2014). Therefore, UAM must have access to health care and psychological health services. Pasic (2020) states that in most member states, young people have access to health care even after reaching majority. However, when kids reach eighteen, psychological help is rarely given. For UAM, psychological care is crucial because of the problems that are brought on by the trauma in the nation of origin, the trauma of the travel, and the psychological effects of the abrupt shift in status once turning eighteen. Due to anxiety, uncertainty, and the psychological effects of losing a guardian or carer, young people have trouble integrating. This "waitinghood" was considered the most intolerable experience for young people in Finland since it disrupted their daily rhythm (Honkasalo, 2016).

But guardians and social workers are not only important when it comes down to psychological support. They also play a significant role in the lives of young people moving to a new country. Since they fight for their rights and serve as counsellors for those seeking refuge, offering support and assistance, they are a crucial source of help for children who need to adapt to a

new legal and social environment because they operate on behalf of and in the best interests of young adults (Pasic, 2020).

2.9 Participation in a new society with the help of youth work

By promoting social inclusion, participation, personal development, helping with language skills, and supporting young people's emotional and overall wellbeing, the youth sector can function as a crucial support system for those going through a transition. To encourage active citizenship and stop discrimination, violence, and social exclusion, the Committee of Ministers Recommendation also acknowledges the need for non-formal education and youth organizations (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 2015).

Due to movement constraints, UAMs seldom have the opportunity to speak up in public discussions about pressing issues. Youth work may thus help UAM to become more involved in society (Shterjoski, 2016). The council of Europe (2015) believes that youth engagement in local decision-making is crucial to fostering inclusive societies since it is one of the most significant indicators of active citizenship. The importance of Youth work is highlighted in the new Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on youth work (Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 2017); yet, the majority of reports appear to exclude refugees from political and social involvement (Huysmans, Verte, & Vanhee, 2016). As said above, there is evidence that youth work can play a crucial role in the integration and the transition of UAM. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to the topic (European Commission & Council of Europe, 2016).

In conclusion, there can be said that there appear to be many challenges and problems once a UAM turns eighteen in the European Member States. At the same, there seem to be many differences between the European Member States when looking at policies and regulations. At this moment, a European-wide framework is still missing, which results in all these different practices regarding the transition to adulthood for UAMs. The question is how UAMs deal with these changes in their life and which resilience strategies they develop based on them. In the following chapter, I provide an overview of the theories used to analyse the data and present more information about the concept of resilience.

3. Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework describes the concepts and major theories regarding emerging adulthood and resilience strategies. These concepts and frameworks will lay the basis for the thesis and provide guidance during the phases of data collection and analyzing.

3.1 Emerging adulthood – characteristics

Emerging adulthood is the period between adolescence and young adulthood. It lasts from the age of 18 till 25 years old. It is a time when people are in search of their own identity, are self-focussed and experience different forms of instability (Arnett J. J., 2015). Arnett was the first one who proposed the term “emerging adulthood”. He describes it as the period of life characterized by the experience of freedom and opportunities for an individual. For many emerging adults, this period in their life is especially important because it includes developments and achievements on the educational and social-emotional levels (Chisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995). Arnett (2000) states that the characteristics of the period resulted from changing demographics in the industrialized world and that these have changed over time. The number of youths that marries or start parenthood at a later age has influenced the experience and assumptions about emerging adulthood. Arnett identifies five characteristics of emerging adulthood (Arnett J. J., 2015). These will briefly be explained in the following paragraph.

Identity exploration

The process of finding out your identity starts during adolescence, but it intensifies during the period of emerging adulthood. Especially in the area of work and love, young people are experiencing and finding out what they want in life. Adolescence has long been associated with being the time when this process of exploration happened. In 1950, Erik Erikson wrote about the adolescent stage of life and how the focus has been on adolescence. Erikson did, however, comment on the “prolonged adolescence” that is characteristic of industrialized civilizations (Erikson, 1950). This comment now applies to a much larger number of young people than it did when he originally made it. Suppose adolescence is defined as the years between the age of ten and eighteen, and emerging adulthood is defined as the years between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. In that case, the majority of identity discovery occurs in emerging adulthood rather than adolescence (Arnett J. J., 2015). For UAMs, this discovery of

their identity can be more difficult. Research by Strohmeier & Schmitt-Rodermund (2008) shows that refugees often face identity confusion when emigrating to another country. Research by Zetti et al. (2022) confirms this. It states that adverse events in life can impact identity formation. As said above, this is an important stage that takes place during emerging adulthood. For UAMs, identity development may be affected by trauma and societal shifts, which might result in identity dispersion, a key idea in personality disorders. However, there is a dearth of prior studies on personality disorders among refugees (Zetti, et al., 2022).

Instability

Young people in the age of emerging adulthood tend to experience a lot of instability in their life. Varied factors cause this feeling of instability. Firstly, emerging adults are expected to have a plan for their future and the path they want to follow in their life. But this plan tends to change a lot during emerging adulthood because many natural revisions occur during this period. The number of movements from one residence to another is one aspect that shows the uncertainty and instability that is experienced and which often leads to the change of plans in this time of life (Arnett J. J., 2015). UAMs experience different forms of instability throughout emerging adulthood. One example is that UAMs lose their right to housing once they turn 18 years old and must move to another place (Nationale Ombudsman, 2022). Sometimes, there is no follow-up housing once the UAM turns eighteen in the municipality. In this case, the UAM then basically ends up on the street. These situations can cause a lot of instability and uncertainty in the life of UAMs but are one of the possible consequences of the changing policies once turning eighteen (Nidos, n.d.). In addition, this degree of instability can also be amplified since UAMs are aware of the uncertainty of their future (PICUM, 2021). Especially when it comes down to their legal status. UAMs said they missed the carefreeness that having a solid residency status gives, as well as the frustration of knowing that they would become undocumented at 18 (Staring & Aarts, 2010). Temporary residency permits do not do much to alleviate this pressure (PICUM, 2022).

Self-Focus

Another aspect that is part of emerging adulthood is being self-focused. During adolescence, there is already a form of self-focussing, but this mostly happens under the supervision of family and teachers. From the age of thirty, more obligations occur, for example, because most people tend to have a job or stable relationship then. The period in between is emerging

adulthood, whereby skills are developed, and a better understanding of what they want in life is gained (Arnett J. J., 2015). These forms of self-focus can be complicated, especially for UAMs. Because of their culture, they are used to not putting their own needs first but always thinking about others and the group first. Due to these cultural characteristics, they feel responsible for the family they left behind at home. They feel the need and responsibility to send money back home and arrange for family reunification (de Gruijter, Yohannes, Razenberg, & Maan, 2021). All these factors can lead to the fact that there is less room for self-focus for UAMs during emerging adulthood.

Feeling In-Between

Because of the instability and exploration phase during emerging adulthood, it is known as a period where people feel “in-between”. It marks the period between the restrictions faced in adolescence and the responsibilities that come with adulthood. People feel neither adolescent nor adult (Arnett J. J., 2015). Research showed that people consider three criteria to be the most important for becoming an adult (L.J. & Luster, 2014).

1. Accept responsibility for yourself
2. Make independent decisions
3. Become financially independent

Commonly these criteria, also known as the “Big Three”, happen gradually instead of all at once (Arnett J. J., 2015). Most people feel completely adult when they are in their late twenties. This is when they can make their own decisions, are independent and accept responsibility, as shown in the three criteria above. This theory is not only prevalent in Western countries but applies to all countries around the world (Arnett J. J., 2015). But this is different for UAMs. As soon as they become 18 years old, they are expected to be independent. (Nationale Ombudsman, 2022). This means that they do not have until the end of their twenties to develop the three criteria mentioned above. They must adapt and become responsible for their actions in a shorter period.

Possibilities/Optimism

People experience emerging adulthood as a time wherein many possibilities remain possible because people still have a lot of freedom. Hopes are high, and for many young people, the future seems rose-coloured, with envisions of a well-paying job and a lifelong marriage. These possibilities make it feasible to change one's life because, in general, emerging adults have left their parent's house but at the same time, have not committed to a new network of obligations and relationships. This phase is particularly crucial for young people who have grown up in challenging circumstances, like refugees. Children and teenagers find it difficult to rise above a chaotic or unhappy family since they return to that environment daily, and the family's difficulties are reflected in their problems. If the parents have a lot of fights, they must listen to it. If the parents are poor, the children are likely to be poor as well, living in unsafe neighbourhoods with poor schools and fewer educational opportunities (Arnett J. J., 2015).

However, during emerging adulthood, the period when many young people leave their parents' homes, new opportunities change their lives. Especially for young people that come from troubled families, this is the time to follow another path and have a new beginning. All emerging adults carry the influence of their family with them, which leads to the fact that the extent to which someone can change is limited. Nevertheless, emerging adulthood offers more opportunities for transformation than any other stage in life. For these seven to ten years, the realization of all dreams appears attainable since, for most people, the options on how to live are greater than ever before and probably than they ever will be (Arnett J. J., 2015). This form of optimism also characterizes many UAMs in the Netherlands. They are motivated to build a future in the Netherlands (Nationale Ombudsman, 2022). On one side, there is this form of optimism, but on the other side, it is difficult for UAMs to develop and envision a perspective for their future. This is supported by the research of the "Nationale Ombudsman" (2022): *"Supervisors tell that the young people come to the Netherlands with expectations that are not fulfilled. Life in Eritrea is hard but simple. Life is complex in the Netherlands, and that scares them off."* (Nationale Ombudsman, 2022, p.25).

3.1.1 Relevance for this research

The theory of emerging adulthood is used for this thesis because it is the period where the participants of this thesis are in at this moment. They have already experienced the transition of turning eighteen and are now moving from being an adolescent to becoming an adult. As described above, there are five distinctive characteristics that many young people face during this period. But because of the different situations that UAMs are in, the characteristics of this period and how they experience it differ between both groups. According to Schmitt-Rodermund & Silbereisen (2008) both native-born and immigrant adolescents must deal with various developmental challenges such as educational performance, finding their identity and social interaction with peers. But what differs is that UAMs must overcome unique acculturation problems that are either related to the immigration process (for example, the many resettlements) or the fact that they are immigrants in a new country (for example, discrimination). Although immigrant adolescents confront unique obstacles, there are much more parallels than differences between native-born and immigrant emerging adults, and failed development strategies appear to work in both groups (Schmitt-Rodermund & Silbereisen, 2008).

3.2 Resilience strategies

The above paragraphs provide an overview of the first concept, "Emerging Adulthood". The following paragraphs will focus on the second concept used for this thesis, namely "Resilience". Firstly, an introduction to the term resilience will be presented. Secondly, the relevance and contribution of the concept for this research will be further explained.

3.2.1 What is meant by resilience?

The term resilience is used in many fields. The term is used in the context of socio-ecological systems but also in child development. Despite this broad use of the term in different disciplines, the conceptualization of social resilience is still a neglected issue (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010). Books of Obrist (2006) and Pelling (2003) acknowledge that social institutions that shape the access to resources at the household level are key for building resilience. Other researchers like Elinor Ostrom (2006) have focussed more on social agents in resilience.

Two theories that both look at the human capacity to anticipate, cope, adapt and recover in times of vulnerability and after the situation of a hazard are the livelihood approach and the disaster approaches. In these approaches, the term vulnerability is used instead of resilience.

As a result, one might say that research that focuses on the 'coping capacity' and the related issue of 'survival strategies' already addresses the topic, negating the necessity for a new analytic concept like 'resilience.' The authors of the multi-layered framework state that:

"A combining of vulnerability and resilience as equivalent concepts leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying social phenomena". (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010, p.285)

In another work field, child development psychology, common definitions of resilience allude to a dynamic process comprising positive adaptation within the setting of significant adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). In this case, the goal of research on resilience is to figure out what causes this positive adaptation as a response in cases of ongoing adversity. In ecology and child psychology, the definition of resilience is hard to grasp. Adger (2003) tries to explain the term's meaning in both work fields.

"Resilience is seen as a dynamic process, not as a state (ecology) or a trait (psychology), and may change over time. It is a scientific construct that has to be inferred and cannot be directly observed or measured. Resilience refers to the ability, capability or capacity of individuals, social groups and even social-ecological systems to live with disturbances, adversities or disasters, and 'the ability to persist and adapt'". (Adger, 2003, p.2.)

3.2.2. Contributions of social and cultural theory

There are different approaches developed in the past that can help to refine the understanding of social resilience. Structuration theories that look further than the idea of social production of reality are especially interesting to use (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Structuration theories study the dialectic interaction between the human ability to act (agency) and possibilities as well as limits (structure) determined by wider economic, political, and social factors (Ortner, 1984).

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) developed a theory that is specifically relevant for resilience research. He differentiates between three different forms of capital that determine human agency. He includes both material and in-material resources to define human agency. The three types of capital that he distinguishes are economic capital (control over economic resources), social capital (important relations), and cultural capital (knowledge, for example, education). Cultural capital is especially important in the light of resilience research. It can therefore be

divided into three categories: embodied (personal position and habits), objectified (traditions in the form of material) and institutionalized (educational level). Bourdieu added a fourth capital, symbolic capital, at a later moment to the theory. Symbolic capitals are the power-related resources that influence actors' access to capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The power-related resources, or in other words, the symbolic capital, are especially important since they both influence the ability to act as it gives access to the other three categories of capital (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010).

The concept of a social field is added later to the theory and is used to describe the classification of people's or organizations' social statuses. It helps to see that various actors have different forms of capital and power. This leads to the fact that they are exposed to the same hazard in diverse ways and hence experience various restrictions and possibilities when developing resilience. According to this theory, the function of capital access in specific social fields determines whether players are in a position of dominance, subordination, or equality (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010).

3.2.3 Multi-layered Social Resilience Framework

According to Obrist, Pfeiffer and Henley (2010) attention to the resilience of human actors and the structure of society was still lacking in current literature. The aim of the framework is to find out: *"how does society structure the resilience of human actors, and how do actors structure resilience in social interaction?"* Because self-organization (Folke, et al., 2002) is seen as a fundamental component of resilience, this abstract topic is essential for mitigation research. We can better create institutional arrangements that improve or support self-organization processes if we understand social structuration processes better. The framework is based on concepts of different social and cultural theories and includes some concepts of Bourdieu's theory, which is

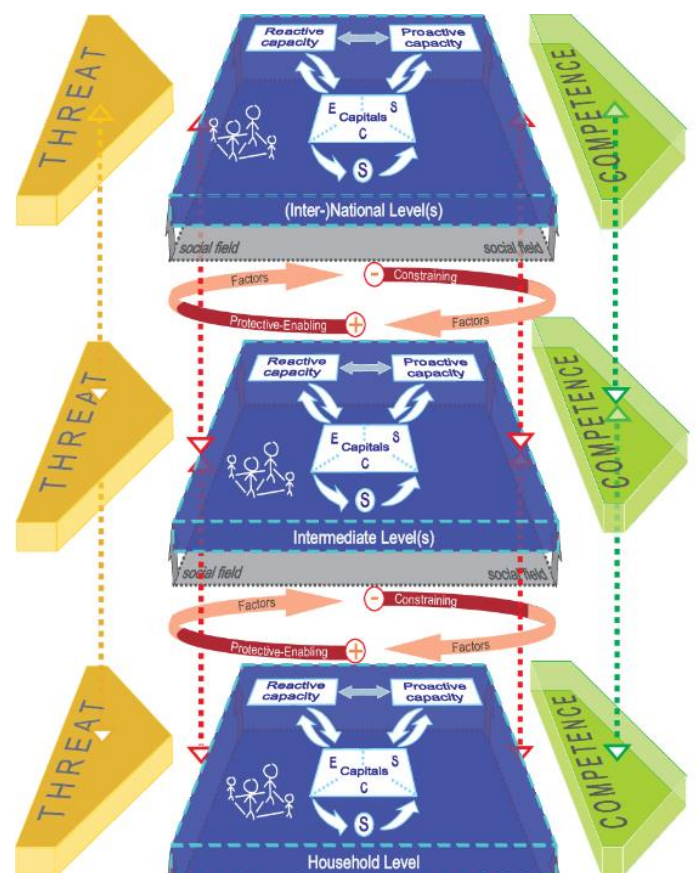


Figure 4: Multi-layered Social Resilience Framework (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010)

described in the above paragraph. The framework is shown in figure 4. Social resilience is, in this framework, defined as an actor's ability to access capitals to deal with and adjust to difficult conditions (reactive capacity) and to also seek for and generate choices (proactive capacity) and thereby acquire enhanced competencies (positive outcomes) in coping with a form of danger (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010).

Notes for the researcher

Furthermore, each layer in figure 4 represents a layer in society whereby actors are a part of the social field. Each layer can have a different threat. Firstly, before using this framework, there has to be assessed whether the affected people or groups are aware of the existence of the threat and if the threat is relevant or important for these people. Secondly, it is essential that the researcher specifies which outcome she expects and which aspect she wants to focus on, for example, livelihood security or wellbeing (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010).

3.2.4 Relevance for this research

Other research show that there are elevated levels of resilience among UAMs (Huemer et al., 2009; Bean, 2006). Research by Rodriguez & Dobler (2021) confirms this. They state:

“Despite high levels of adversity, UASC (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) often have considerable resilience and make remarkable recoveries. However, literature exploring their resources or their own views of what helps or hinders recovery is scarce.” (Rodriguez & Dobler, 2021, p.559)

Despite setbacks and demanding situations, UAMs can recover from this and show high forms of resilience (Rodriguez & Dobler, 2021). As stated in the quote above, literature about the resources that would help or hinder overcoming inevitable setbacks is scarce. Therefore, this thesis adds to the current literature about resilience strategies among UAMs. Firstly, it looks at the factors that hinder and help UAMs during their transition to adulthood. Secondly, the focus will be on the resilience strategies that UAMs develop based on these setbacks once they turn 18. Thirdly, this research is unique because it includes the theory of emerging adulthood in the results chapter.

4. Conceptual framework

4.1 Conceptual discussion

Youth to adulthood transition

Turning eighteen in the Netherlands is a big and joyous moment for the greatest part of the youth in the Netherlands. It means you can drink alcohol and drive a car from that moment on. These are events in life that many young people look forward to. Furthermore, does turning 18 mean that from that moment on, you are financially independent. These events and changes can be seen as the start of the path to independence in life (PICUM, 2022). This period in life, which starts when someone is eighteen and usually ends around the age of 25, is called emerging adulthood (Arnett J. J., 2014). It is the period between adolescence and young adulthood. This phase has been getting more attention in the last decade. It is a period in someone's life where many changes happen. For most people, it is a period of instability, identity exploration and self-focus (Hill, Lalji, van Rossum, van der Geest, & Blokland, 2015). During this period, youth also starts to become independent financially and socially. But although parents are not responsible for their children once they turn 18, research shows that a big part of the parents keeps supporting their children. This happens both material and immaterial (Wijzer in geldzaken, 2014). Not only do parents help their children with a monthly financial contribution, but they also provide different forms of advice. Research of 'Wijzer in geldzaken' (2014) shows that young people take advantage of this privilege on a large scale.

Youth to adulthood transition among refugees

Most unaccompanied refugees experience the transition from adolescence to adulthood differently than Dutch youth. They fled at an early age and became, in most cases, independent at a much earlier age because they fled to another country alone (PICUM, 2022). Until they reach eighteen, unaccompanied refugees have the right to education, health care, and a guardian. This changes drastically once they turn eighteen. From that moment on, they are expected to be independent. They lose the guardian assigned to them through the organization of Nidos and, in some cases, even lose their house. From then on, the municipalities are responsible for housing and additional support systems or supervisors for this vulnerable group (Zorg & SociaalWeb, 2016). Even though there is the help of

“Vluchtelingenwerk” in the province of Utrecht, many youths still experience social and financial problems. Mainly because of the limited financial capabilities and services available for ex-UMA’s. They depend on student loans and cannot fall back on financial assistance from their parents or other family members (Nidos, n.d.).

Challenges faced by refugees as they transition from youth to adulthood

For a long time, different organizations and institutions have mentioned their concerns about the difficulties that UAMs face once they turn eighteen in the Netherlands (Nijboer & van Gastel, 2018; PICUM, 2022; Verloove & Poerwoatmodjo, 2021). One of the most recent publications is the research of the ‘Ombudsman.’ They researched the impact of the changes that occur for UAMs in the Netherlands once they turn eighteen and provided suggestions for the Dutch government to improve policies (Nationale Ombudsman, 2022).

But what changes occur once UAMs turn eighteen, and what challenges do they experience because of this in their daily life? As mentioned in the paragraph above, many changes appear once a UAM turns eighteen in the Netherlands. These changes vary from losing your guardian to the loss of their house. This is especially difficult for UAMs because they cannot fall back on their social network or family. When they turn 18, they are on their own and seen as independent (Nationale Ombudsman, 2022). Furthermore, there appear not only the challenges of these changing policies when growing into adulthood, but structural barriers such as limited access to housing and discrimination in the labour market are challenges UAMs have to deal with daily (Nationale Ombudsman, 2022). The question arises of how UAMs tend to overcome these challenges to stay positive and build a better future for themselves. This thesis will research the resilience strategies that UAMs develop based on their difficulties in their transition into adulthood.

4.2 Conceptual framework

In figure 5, the conceptual model that will be used for this thesis is shown. In this model, the most important concepts are visualized, and the different connections between these concepts can be seen. The first element is, in this case, the “threats”. The first “threat” are everyday structural barriers that UAMs experience during their transition to adulthood in the Netherlands. The newest research of “De Nationale Ombudsman” (2022) shows that besides changing policies when turning 18, daily obstacles such as discrimination in the labour market, access to housing, not being able to speak the Dutch language, and the lack of a social network also play a significant role in the life of UAMS. With the second “threat,” the changing policies in the Netherlands once you turn eighteen are meant. Many UAMs in the Netherlands are independent from that moment. This causes several problems because, in practice, the person cannot live independently on himself at all (Nijboer & van Gastel, 2018). This threat (the changing policies) impacts social, cultural, or economic. The symbolic capital is, in this model, a moderator. The symbolic capital can influence the relationship between the threat and the three different capitals because the symbolic capital (the power-related resources) can affect how actors access the three capitals (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010). Subsequently, does access to these capitals lead to coping with adverse conditions (reactive capacity) and creating other choices (proactive capacity), thereby creating different competencies that lead to resilience strategies. The relationship between the capital and reactive capacity and proactive capacity can go both ways and influence each other (Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010).

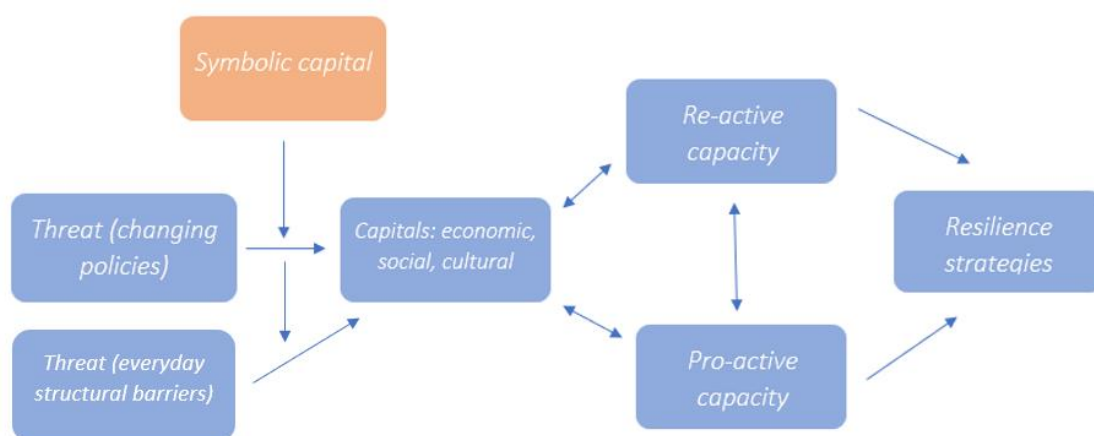


Figure 5: Conceptual model

5. Geographical context

5.1 Introduction

In 2021 2150 UAMs applied for asylum in the Netherlands (CBS, 2021). Three-quarters of them came from Eritrea, Afghanistan, and Syria (Pharos, n.d.). What stands out is that 87 percent of the UAMs who applied for asylum in this same year were male (CBS, 2022). Strindberg (2015) names several explanations why more men apply for asylum in European Member states than females. The most important reason she names is that men can oversee the long and dangerous trips better than women. The share of men and women in refugee camps in neighbouring countries is equal, but women and children are left behind while waiting for their men to arrive in Europe (Strindberg, 2015). In some cases, as this thesis focuses on, not the adult man travels alone, but the child under the age of eighteen travels independently to Europe. This group of children are called UAMs. UAMs are refugees that 1. arrive in a country without their parents or another person who has custody over the young person, 2. Coming from outside the European Union, and 3. They are under the age of 18 when they arrive in the Netherlands (younger than 18 years old). If there is proof that a UAM needs protection, an asylum permit will be perceived (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Figure 6 shows how the procedure for shelter access is managed in the Netherlands. It is a complicated system whereby firstly, a distinction is made between children under and above the age of 15 and secondly, a distinction as to whether the UAM has or will possibly receive a residence permit in the future (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). In the following paragraphs , an overview of the current situation regarding the transition to adulthood for UAMs in the Netherlands will be given.

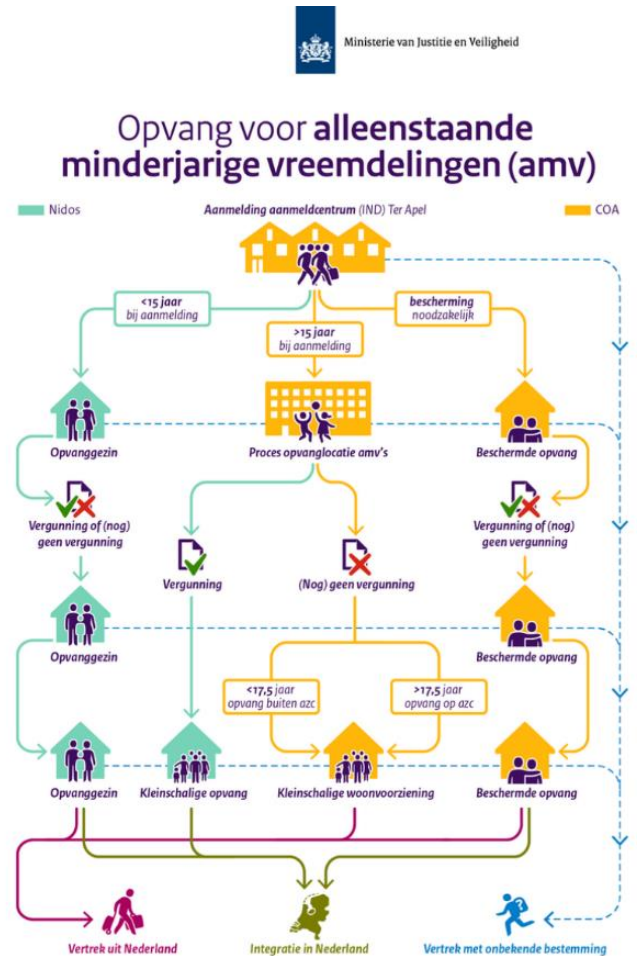


Figure 6: Process of access to shelter in the Netherlands (Rijksoverheid, n.d.)

5.2 Guardianship

When refugees have not reached the age of 18 years, they have the right to education, shelter, and health care in the Netherlands. In addition, the UAM is also assigned a guardian until he or she turns 18 years old (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). In the Netherlands, someone or some sort of organization must care for every child. According to Civil Code (CC), Art. 1:245, this can either be the child's parent or another legal guardian form (Zijlstra, et al., 2017). However, because UAMs travel alone to the Netherlands, they fall under the responsibility of Nidos. Nidos is the Dutch institution responsible for the guardianship of UAMs and UASC. All guardians at Nidos are subject to the same duties and responsibilities as parents until the child turns eighteen (Goeman, et al., 2011). According to the European Migration Network research, the Netherlands is unique in its approach to the reception of UAM (European Migration Network, n.d.). In other European Member states, the care for UAMs falls under general youth institutions, while as has been written above, the Netherlands has the specialized organization Nidos.

The primary responsibilities of guardianship include acting in the child's best interests, providing a secure and nurturing environment for the child, and encouraging the growth of their social network in the Netherlands (Goeman et al., 2011; Spinder & Van Hout, 2008). Furthermore, they are also responsible for ensuring that children are included in every decision that affects them, for speaking out for their rights and promptly finding and executing a long-lasting solution for each child's living situation and outlook on the future (Goeman, et al., 2011). Usually, a guardian is responsible for a maximum of 20 UAM, but because of the increased number of UAM that came to Europe since 2015, every guardian is now accountable for 23,5 children (Nidos, 2016). In practice, this means that UAMs receive a visit from their guardian every two to three weeks (Kalverboer, Zijlstra, Zevulun, ten Brummelaar, & Beltman, 2017).

Research shows that UAM value their close bond with their guardians; they say they can talk to them about their problems, engage in recreational activities, and get practical help. Nevertheless, UAMs are less content with their guardians for various reasons, including a greater need for assistance, infrequent contact with the child, a focus on the child's potential return, and a lack of comprehension of the current uncertain circumstances. Furthermore, compared to Dutch classmates their same age, UAMs generally appear to miss parental

assistance (Kalverboer, Zijlstra, Zevulun, ten Brummelaar, & Beltman, 2017; Starink & Aarts, 2010).

5.3 Housing

When UAMs apply for asylum in the Netherlands when they are under the age of fifteen, they will be placed in a foster family. UAMs between the ages of 15 and 18 when they apply for asylum will be placed in small-scale shelters. This is done by the organization Nidos. Nidos is a certified institution conducting guardianship for unaccompanied minors who applied for asylum in the Netherlands and are staying in a COA shelter (NIDOS, n.d.). In these shelters, they are supervised by mentors who help them to become independent once they turn eighteen (Verloove & Poerwoatmodjo, 2021). Before 2016, UAMs had to move places frequently. Since the introduction of a new model for the shelter for UAMs in 2016, the number of movements has been reduced, and most shelters are working on a smaller scale (Nijboer & van Gastel, 2018).

5.4 Education

UAM have the right to education in the Netherlands, regardless of their legal status. UAM are placed in elementary, secondary, or vocational education. The municipalities are responsible for finding an appropriate place for the UAM to follow education (Buisman, et al., 2016). Children above the age of 12 at the time of their arrival will start their education in a "Internationale Schakel Klas" (ISK). They can follow an education at the ISK for a maximum of two years (LOWAN, 2016). At the ISK, they are being prepared for their transition to public school, whereby the emphasizes lies on language instruction. Eighty percent of the time they spend on the ISK is used to master, gain knowledge and speak the Dutch language (VNG, 2016). When UAM have mastered the Dutch language to a satisfactory degree, they can enrol in public education (LOWAN, 2016).

Concerns exist over the conditions of the education provided to youngsters requesting refuge. For instance, according to the Minister and State Secretary of Education, Culture, and Science (2015), instructors are not always adequately prepared to instruct illiterate students.

5.5 Differences between municipalities

The guidance of the UAM is transferred from Nidos to the municipality once the UAM turns 18. The guidance that they receive differs per municipality. Every municipality can decide how further guidance will look (Verloove & Poerwoatmodjo, 2021). While there are several support systems and activities at the local level, if people are undocumented, they essentially have to take care of themselves. Children are sent to an asylum seeker reception centre if they are still in the asylum process (Oxfam, 2021). Some municipalities experience, for example, with independent shelter for former UAMs, while in other cases, a social district team is deployed (Verloove & Poerwoatmodjo, 2021). According to the research of Oxfam (2021), there appear to be many differences between municipalities regarding the sort of help UAMs receive. In some municipalities, this support and guidance are completely missing.

Youth born in the Netherlands can fall back on their parents between the ages of 18 and 21 because of the “maintenance obligation”. Since 2018, foster children can also stay in their foster family till they are 21 years old. At this moment, this is only not the case for unaccompanied refugees in the Netherlands. But at this moment, there is a political lobby to let Nidos stay responsible for UAMs till they become 21 years old. Some municipalities did not wait for this outcome and have already started to offer comprehensive guidance and care (Keijl, 2020). One municipality in the Netherlands that is firmly committed with the assistance of UAMs is the municipality of Utrecht. A local “ex-ama” team is being financed by the municipality and whose goal is to help UAMs become self-sufficient. They do this by creating a network of people to assist UAM as they become adults (Oxfam, 2021).

A spokesman from the Municipality of Utrecht emphasized that the strategy has consistently shown to be quite successful over time. Many UAMs who received legal aid could gain regular status and 75% of all documented migrants who completed the program no longer required social support since they were self-sufficient and had found employment or begun their educational careers. The initiative was trialled in 16 other Dutch towns due to its success in Utrecht. Sadly, these pilot programs ended because there was no national political will and no funding to keep them going (Oxfam, 2021).

5.6 partner organization

The partner organization that helped me write this thesis is the organization New Dutch Connections. New Dutch Connections (NDC) tries to connect experts by experience in bridging the gap between the Dutch and the New Dutch citizens. NDC employs theatre, art, and training to inspire and motivate individuals to become active participants in our multicultural and multi-religious society so that the foreigner is no longer a foreigner and the refugee feels at home. NDC's work brings together individuals, organizations, and institutions who would never meet otherwise. NDC knows different initiatives. Through the "ToekomstAcademie" and projects such as "Ondernemen in je Eigen Toekomst," young refugees are taught how to take control of their own future (New Dutch Connections, n.d.). One of the events I attended multiple times during my data collection was a new program of NDC named "Be Seen". It is a new talent development program whereby a group of around 20 UAMs between the age of 16 and 23 meet every Monday. The first few weeks were meant to get to know each other and to create a safe place. Every evening, the participants first eat together and do different workshops afterwards. This varies from playing instruments, photography and playing games with each other. The main goal of these evenings is to discover everyone's talents through creative workshops.

The last two evenings that I attended focused on preparing the theatre production "Future Citizens" where the talent development program participants organized a big part of the show. During this theatre show, the participants got a chance to present themselves and share their dreams for the future. This was a chance for them to get in contact with professionals, peers and local residents. This is especially important for this specific group because it is, in general difficult to build a network with social and professional contacts for many UAMs (Het Wilde Westen, n.d.). This is one example whereby NDC succeeds in connecting newcomers in the Netherlands with Dutch society to brighten and support them in their future.

In this chapter, an overview of the geographical context and a description of the partner organization is provided. In the following chapter, more information regarding the data collection process is presented.

6. Methodology

This chapter includes the operationalization of the different variables that are mentioned in the theoretical and conceptual framework. Besides this, the research methods, the researcher's positionality and the limitations and risks of this research are described.

6.1 Operationalization of variables

In this paragraph, the variables that are presented in the theoretical framework and conceptual framework are operationalized. This is visible in table 1. This is important because this operationalization will make it easier to answer the main research question and measure the different variables.

Variables	Operationalization	Literature
Changing policies	The consequences of policy and changes in their rights once UAM turn 18 years old in the Netherlands.	(Community Tool Box, n.d.)
Daily structural barriers	Structural barriers are impediments that disproportionately negatively impact a group and continue to sustain glaring gaps in success. Policies, procedures, and other standards that systematically disadvantage vulnerable while favouring advantaged groups constitute structural obstacles.	(Simons, McDaniel, Fyffe, & Lowenstein, 2015)
Emerging adulthood	The period in life between adolescence and adulthood. They are usually experienced between the age of 18 and 25. The following five characteristics of this period can be identified. 1. Identity exploration 2. Instability 3. Self-focus 4. Feeling-in between	(Arnett J. J., 2015)

	5. Possibilities/optimism	
Resilience strategies	<p>Resilience is the process and result of effectively adjusting to harsh or demanding life situations, mainly via mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal pressures.</p> <p>Examples are focusing on school, working hard, caring for family and finding solutions to improve life.</p>	<p>(American Psychological Association, n.d.)</p> <p>(Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010)</p>
Unaccompanied minors	A person who is under the age of eighteen, unless the applicable legislation states that majority is acquired earlier, who is "separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has an obligation to do so," is considered to be an unaccompanied minor	(Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1997)

Table 1: Operationalization of variables

Variables	Operationalization	Literature
Social capital	Valuable connections or relations with others, family, friends, business contacts	(Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010)
Economic capital	The access to economic resources such as cash and assets	(Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010)
Cultural capital	Knowledge, for example, education or essential skills, learning a language	(Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010)
Symbolic capital	Power-related resources, the power to access the three other capitals, for example, through volunteering	(Obrist, Pfeiffer, & Henley, 2010)

Table 2: Operationalization of the variables: the four capitals

6.2 Research Methods

This research is primarily qualitative but also includes quantitative data collection. Therefore, this research applies a mixed methods approach. The study started with gathering different literature and analysing existing literature about resilience strategies among refugees. To get an understanding of the regulations and background of resilience strategies existing academic literature was used. This information was used to write the theoretical framework and to get a better image of the local context. This is written down in the geographical context chapter. Secondary data was also used to interpret the results of the research. Academic articles, policy documents and news articles were used in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

After the desk research, qualitative methods were used. These consists of participatory observations and semi-structured interviews. According to Beck and Manuel (2008) the use of research interviews is a good choice if you want to explore specific human issues and if the answer to the main question is best answered in prose. Seidman states *“it is an excellent way to obtain insight into social issues by exploring the individuals’ experience regarding these issues.”* (Seidman, 2012, p.154)

For this thesis, the main goal is to research the experiences and issues of unaccompanied minor refugees once turning 18. Based on the statement of Seidman (2012), conducting interviews seems the best method for this research. The interviews are semi-structured and include young refugees who are currently in the age of emerging adulthood (18 till 25). Semi-structured interviews are flexible in structure, give insight into the participant’s perspectives and provide a deep exploration of the thoughts and experiences of the participant (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2018). These three characteristics make this the best method to use for this research.

6.3 Primary data collection

To get a better understanding of the life of unaccompanied minor refugees, participatory observations were conducted. These observations helped to understand better what the respondents have gone through and which topics they talk about in their daily life. Firstly, it is relevant for this research to understand this group's daily struggles better. What do they have to deal with, and where do they mostly talk about with peers?

The participatory research took place at various locations and moments. Secondly, it is a way to blend in the community and get to know the respondents. This is especially important

because the topics that will be discussed in the interviews are sensitive and not easy to talk about for most unaccompanied refugees. Thirdly, participant observations helped me to develop a non-judgmental attitude and helped me to be aware of the “culture shock” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011).

As a researcher, I contacted different organizations that work with or care for unaccompanied minor refugees. Examples are “het ROC”, NIDOS and local activities that are organized by the partner organization New Dutch Connections. The observations provide the context on where the interview guide will be based on. After four weeks of participatory observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to better understand the experiences of unaccompanied refugees once they turned 18. This will be further explained in the following paragraphs.

6.4 Identification of the target group and selection criteria

The target group consists of ex- young unaccompanied minor refugees who arrived in the Netherlands between 2015 and 2021, who have been in the Netherlands for at least one year and have a residence permit. The respondents are between 18 and 25 years old and are therefore currently in the phase of emerging adulthood. They have already experienced the transition of turning 18 years old in the Netherlands and can therefore tell what impact this had on their life. There were no selection criteria of the country where the respondents came from. Since 79 percent of the minor refugees that fled to the Netherlands are male, and 80 percent of my respondents are male, it is good to be aware that bias can occur. This has to be taken into consideration when discussing the results (Noyon, Driessen, Boot, Kulu-Glasgow, & Verschuren, 2020).

6.5 Sampling strategy

Snowball and purposive sampling have been used to select respondents. Firstly, different organizations were contacted and asked if they would help by providing participants for the research. An email was sent to the following organizations: NIDOS, Yoin/Entrea Lindenhout, ISK's and language schools, COA, Shadow Game, and municipality of Utrecht. All these organizations are based in the province of Utrecht and were specifically chosen because they work with and are in contact with unaccompanied minor refugees. Furthermore, the partner organization NDC has also cooperated with several of these organizations in the past, which could have made it easier to contact participants.

In some cases, snowball sampling was used to get in contact with more participants. Because unaccompanied minor refugees are vulnerable and hard to reach group this method was used to contact participants. Snowball sampling procedures have been recognized as the best method when seeking to research hidden groups for whom suitable lists and hence sampling frames are not always easily available (Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2011). It is best to use random sampling techniques to get a representative sample for the whole study population. But because we are dealing with a vulnerable, hard-to-reach and sometimes even invisible group of participants, it was best to use snowball and purposive sampling methods as described above. It is possible that because of the used methods, a selection bias could occur. To reduce this, multiple entry points in different communities were used. This was done by contacting various organizations who work with minor refugees. By doing this, a wide range of people that could provide further contacts was used (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Bloch, 2007; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). It has been argued that increasing sample sizes and using numerous starting places for snowball initiation, and having a modest number of links within each chain can increase representativeness and heterogeneity in snowball sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Bloch, 2007).

Unfortunately, it wasn't easy to find enough respondents for this research. Most of the organizations mentioned above and institutions were unwilling to cooperate in the study or did not respond. Therefore, I depended on the activities, like workshops and meetings with unaccompanied minor refugees that New Dutch Connections organized.

6.6 Semi-structured interviews

Before the start of the interviews, an interview guide was prepared. (Appendix 1) Several changes were made to this interview guide during the research. These were based on experiences with former respondents. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with four male refugees and one female refugee. Besides the interviews with UAMs, one expert interview with a teacher at an international language school (ISK) was conducted via Teams. For this interview, a different interview guide was prepared. (Appendix 2) This interview was also conducted in Dutch.

All the interviews started with a brief introduction about who I am, an explanation of the aim of this research and the signing of the form of consent. After that, some broad questions were

asked about the respondents' age, gender, and nationality. This was also important to determine if they met all the criteria drawn up and therefore were eligible for this research.

The goals of the interviews with UAMs were to better understand how they experienced the transition to adulthood in the Netherlands and if or how they overcame specific additional challenges that came with this transition. Some of the interviews felt more like a conversation than an actual interview, but this was important because I wanted to make the respondents feel at ease. In some cases, sensitive topics were discussed. This also led to the fact that the structure of the questions in the interview guide was often not maintained. But despite that, essential information about all the research topics and themes was given during the interviews.

All the respondents spoke Dutch, and therefore all interviews took place in Dutch. Sometimes respondents could not find the right words to answer questions in Dutch. In these cases, they were able to answer the questions in English. All the interviews took between 30 to 45 minutes. They were recorded by phone with the informed consent of the participants. Based on these recordings, the interviews were transcribed. After the transcription of each interview, the data was analyzed. The interview transcripts were carefully read numerous times to acquire a general feel of the data and capture the initial and personal thoughts. I did the coding process manually, whereby I started marking all the different codes in Word. This was done for all five interviews, which resulted in a list of 150 different codes. These codes were later divided into super codes in excel and categorized into different themes. Lastly, code trees were developed and based on these, I could identify relationships between various parts of the data. The procedure, as mentioned above, served as the foundation for this thesis' analytical and empirical chapters.

6.7 Participatory observations

Meeting with stakeholders

In May, I also did participatory observations. Firstly, I went to an event of my partner organization New Dutch Connections. This event was meant for policymakers and other stakeholders from European countries working with unaccompanied minor refugees. This event showed me how the transition of turning eighteen for refugees in other European countries works and which policies and procedures are used there. The information

mentioned during the meeting confirmed the idea that I had formed based on the existing literature about European guidelines regarding the transition to adulthood. Most attendees were inspired by the work and projects New Dutch Connections has set up in recent years. Especially in how they tend to inspire young refugees and motivate them to develop themselves.

A policy officer who works for the Belgium government spoke about how Belgium's policies regarding the transition to adulthood work. Based on this conversation, the conclusion could be made that the system in Belgium works differently than it does in the Netherlands. One of the main differences is that all procedures are arranged via the central government in Brussels. While in the Netherlands, the system is decentralized, and the care and different rules and policies are distributed over the other municipalities.

Workshop with youth

At the end of April, I did several participant observations. I attended multiple workshops for unaccompanied minor refugees that were organized by New Dutch Connections in cooperation with "Het Wilde Westen" in Utrecht. On these evenings, the youth come together and do different activities together. This evening, some people cooked Greek food, and we ate together with the whole group of around twenty children and with varying supervisors of both organizations. After this, the youth does a different activity every week. This time they got the assignment to take some photographs in the neighbourhood together. These activities are organized to support these young people and to make them feel welcome and secure/safe. I spoke with some children under eighteen and people who have already experienced the transition of turning 18. The findings chapter will discuss the main findings of these participatory observations.

6.8 Reflection and limitations of the research

As someone who never has had to flee in her life, I find it sometimes difficult during this research to ask specific questions about sensitive topics. What I experienced is that I felt like an outsider and that I find it, therefore, challenging to ask these tough questions because I had the feeling that they might or would probably see me as an outsider. This might have stopped me from asking questions and researching sensitive topics. This is something that I specifically experienced during the first two interviews. Luckily, I came to this realisation quite early. Therefore I was able to adapt my interview methods to ensure that I will miss essential

data because I am uncomfortable asking specific sensitive questions. I did this by adding the sentence “if you feel comfortable to talk about this” after some questions during the interview.

Potential risks within this research lie in the difficulty of finding enough respondents in time. Despite many initiatives and different contact moments with organizations, none of the organizations responded to my emails and calls. This resulted in the fact that I had to rely on the activities that were organized by my partner organization New Dutch Connections. As mentioned in the description of the participant observations above, I attended weekly workshops where I spoke with around twenty unaccompanied minor refugees aged 16 to 25 years old every Monday from the end of May till June. These meetings provided me with a lot of information about the daily life and daily struggles that they were experiencing. It was also a satisfactory manner to build a bond with my respondents. This was especially important because of the sensitive topic I discussed with them. Unfortunately, only five people matched the criteria for my target group, which is why I could only conduct five interviews. One additional interview was achieved because of snowball sampling. And one interview with an expert, a teacher at “de ISK in Laren”, a school where migrants under the age of eighteen learn the Dutch language, was conducted with the help of my own connections. This resulted in the fact that this research is only based on five interviews with participants and one interview with an expert. Despite the many participatory observations, the number of interviews is less than I initially planned, which may influence and limit the results of this thesis. But one positive note is that there was saturation after five interviews because the answers showed that there mostly appear economic and social changes in the life of unaccompanied minor refugees once they turn 18. This could also be confirmed based on the teacher’s answers at the ISK in Laren.

Another potential limitation in this research could be the language barrier. Many of the persons I spoke to had been living in the Netherlands for only a few years, resulting in the fact that many of them could not express themselves well in Dutch. This may have influenced the results because I only spoke with the youth who could speak Dutch or English well enough.

7. The experiences of Emerging Adulthood

How do UAMs experience the period of emerging adulthood in the Netherlands?

The theoretical framework chapter gives an overview of the five characteristics that most young people experience during emerging adulthood. This chapter presents an analysis of how UAMs experience the five characteristics of emerging adulthood.

7.1 Identity exploration

UAMs experience the exploration of their identity during emerging adulthood on a different level than Dutch peers. The main reason for this difference is that UAMs live between two cultures. They are still connected with their life in their home country, while they at the same time try to adapt to life in the Netherlands. This living in between two worlds made it challenging to adapt to life in the Netherlands, which resulted in the fact that it takes longer for UAMs to get the feeling that the Netherlands is their home. This is presented in the following quote.

“Yes, not in the beginning, but now I do.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years) *“Yes, I am used to life here. Just like in my own country.”* (Syrian refugee, 21 years)

Nevertheless, even though UAMs see the Netherlands as their home, they remain closely connected with their home country. Especially when it comes to religion, norms, and values and what is most important for this research, the meaning of adulthood.

“For you being an adult is different than for us. You can do anything you want here. You have freedom. This is not the case with us. We have freedom, but because we are Muslim, we cannot act as you do. So, I am mature, but like how it is in my own country, not like how it is here.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

The quote above shows how the meaning of adulthood differs between the two cultures. They feel in between these two cultures and experience a difference in how they would become an adult in Syria and the Netherlands. It also shows that UAMs see the Netherlands as their home on the one side, while on the other side, they feel more attached to their home country. There is a chance that this division can make it difficult for UAMs to create their own identity during emerging adulthood.

7.2 Instability

Based on the answers to the semi-structured interviews and the participant observations, UAMs experience a lot of instability during emerging adulthood. But this instability does not only occur during emerging adulthood. The life of UAMs is characterized by many moments of uncertainty. The following quote shows an example of how this instability in their life influences their choices regarding their study process.

*“Because back in Egypt, I did not want to study, because I did not know if I would stay there.”
(Syrian refugee, 20 years)*

This quote above describes a situation that one of the respondents experienced during adolescence. It shows that the feeling of uncertainty can limit personal development. This limitation of personal development also tends to happen during emerging adulthood. Globally, the feeling of instability during emerging adulthood can be divided into two different stages. The first stage is the period wherein UAMs turn 18 years old. This is considered a period where many changes happen and therefore cause a lot of instability. These changes cause feelings of sadness and anger, which may limit personal development.

“This was very difficult for me. I feel sad and lonely when I think back to this.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

The second stage of emerging adulthood among UAMs occurs between 20 and 25 years old. During this second phase, there is more clarity in their life, and they have adapted more to life in the Netherlands. Due to these adaptations, the Netherlands feels like a home, and they experience stability in their life.

“But now life is clear for me. We have a house, are safe, and there is no war. I can go to school, study, and work, so yeah, I have a good life now.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

Even though UAMs experience a high form of stability during the second phase of emerging adulthood, the thought remains that this stability can vanish at any second. This is a result of the fact that they experienced a lot of uncertain times in their life, for example, war or the challenging and unpredictable journey they made to the Netherlands. The following quote shows this.

"I also want to become a dentist. Because then I will have more certainty in my life. Suppose I go to another country, then I can work there too." (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

7.3 Self-focus

The degree of self-focus among UAMs is lower than usual during emerging adulthood. The main reason for this is that UAMs feel a high form of responsibility for their family. There are two situations that UAMs spoke about where responsibility for their family comes forth. Firstly, because UAMs were still minors when they arrived in the Netherlands, they have the right to family reunification. This is often a long and complicated process, requiring much attention and time from UAMs. It is something that refugees are constantly working on and worrying about. Secondly, if the family reunification is approved, UAMs develop a feeling of great responsibility for their parents. And feel like they need to help them to build up their life in the Netherlands. UAMs feel this responsibility mainly because they can speak the Dutch Language, unlike their parents.

"I have to help my parents. They cannot do anything, and they can also not help me. I had to do it myself." (Syrian refugee, 21 years)

All the factors above show why the level of self-focus among UAMs is relatively low, but what must be noticed is that the level of self-focus slightly increases during emerging adulthood. The quote below shows that the feeling of responsibility remains, but the older they get, the more they realise that it is also essential to think about and care for themselves.

"In the past I would look at how people wanted it, but then I forgot myself. How am I going to divide that? That I can actually take care of myself, but also for everyone. I am not going to forget myself. But I will take care of everything, for me and others." (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

What can be concluded is that the development of self-focus starts at a later age for UAMs. The first few years of emerging adulthood are mainly focused on adapting to the changes that occur and, besides this, also taking care of others. This is partly caused by the often high expectations of family members back home to succeed. In the second phase of emerging adulthood, most participants noticed that they felt more settled in the Netherlands because they had adapted to life here. During this second phase, more attention can be paid to self-focus because there is more stability.

7.4 Feeling in-between

Usually, people feel in-between during emerging adulthood. They are not adolescents anymore but are also not an adult yet. Emerging adults are considered adults when they meet the following three criteria points (Arnett J. J., 2014).

1. Accept responsibility for yourself
2. Make independent decisions
3. Become financially independent

Usually, these criteria are met by youngsters in their late twenties. UAMs seem to meet these criteria at a much younger age, namely during the first years of their twenties. A Syrian refugee says the following when asked about how she noticed that she became more adult in her life.

“I can work independently now. I work more independent than in the past. That is basically the result of these things. Because I really had to do everything by myself and respond and decide you know.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

With the sentence *“that is basically the result of these things”* The impact and additional changes of the changing policies once they turn 18 is meant. Because of the changes during this period in their life, UAMs are expected to become independent and responsible at a much earlier age than Dutch youth. They learn to be independent and make their own decisions in a shorter period, which results in the fact that they also show more signs of being an adult at a younger age.

7.5 Possibilities/optimism

Despite the demanding situations that UAM face during emerging adulthood, which will be discussed in the following chapter, they remain optimistic. What stands out is that they are not positive about the situations that they experienced in their past. Especially the transition of turning eighteen is something that brings up negative emotions. Nevertheless, when speaking about their future, a more positive image emerged. All the respondents are overly optimistic about their future and have high hopes and dreams. This optimism is something that they have developed over time. The following quote shows how this process of becoming an adult and the corresponding focus on their goals and accomplishments in life have developed during emerging adulthood.

“After one year, I only look at how I can get a peaceful life. How am I going to study? I looked at things that give results. In the past I was not like that, but I see that this has changed. I become more serious.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

8. The impact of changing policies once turning 18

What consequences do unaccompanied minors experience from policy changes once they turn eighteen?

For this chapter, an overview of the consequences that UAM face due to the policy changes that occur once they turn 18 years old will be analyzed. For this analysis, the results are divided into the following three dimensions: social, economic, and cultural.

8.1 Social impacts

Many social changes appear once UAMs turn 18 years old in the Netherlands. Many of these changes result from UAM turning eighteen and are therefore seen as an adult to the Dutch law. This means that different rules and policies apply to them. When looking at the social influence of these changes in their life due to policies, one factor stands out: namely, that they lose all forms of support. In practice, this means that UAMs lose their guardian. This is experienced as a challenging period. Where in UAM are feeling lost and alone. The following statement shows this.

“You have got no one anymore—none of the supervisors. Your mentor is gone, your guardian is gone, everyone is just gone. You are just alone.” (Sudanese refugee, 23 years old)

The quote shows that UAMs feel they lose their social support system once turning 18. Not only do they lose their guardian, but during this time, there is also no help from a mentor at school or a supervisor who can help them otherwise with daily struggles. Besides this feeling of loneliness, there are also feelings of sadness when they think back on this period in their life.

“Definitely sad.” (Eritrean refugee, 20 years)

There is a lot of incomprehension among the respondents regarding the loss of support once turning 18. It is something that UAMs are not prepared for. Many do not know what changes will await once they turn 18. Many respondents experience this sudden loss of support as something negative that also affects them later in life.

“When you are 18 years old, maybe you have already seen or heard it. But they will just say goodbye. They will come to you with some sort of gift or a card or something. Then they say,

oke have a nice day, we hope that you will have a great life. And goodbye. Good luck with your life.” (Sudanese refugee, 23 years old)

A factor that makes this sudden loss of support more difficult is that many UAMs do not speak the Dutch language sufficiently, as shown in the quote below.

“If you do not speak the language and you just came to the Netherlands. You were for example almost eighteen. Three months left till you turn 18. Then they will start guiding you and then they will let you go. You lose all the support. Do everything on your own from now on. That is kind of stupid.” (Sudanese refugee, 23 years old)

UAM also reported that they miss the support they used to have at school. They were optimistic about the support they were getting till the age of 18. *“My teacher is always there for me.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years old)* Some respondents said they could always go to their teacher at the ISK to ask for help. But opinions are divided on this topic. Other respondents said: *“I had to ask everyone for help, but sometimes I cannot get help from anyone.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years old)*. This quote is specifically about the help that was available at the ISK. An interview with a teacher at the ISK also pointed out that many students come to her with questions they have. But she admits that she seldom has time to help them with problems that are not school related. *“I honestly have to say that I often refer them to other people (...) I just do not have time to help them with all these questions regarding student finance, for example.” (Teacher at ISK)*

Even though teachers at the ISK do not have much time to help students with non-school-related issues, teachers provide more support to UAMs at ISK than they will get at higher education “MBO.” This is also why teachers at the ISK sometimes tutor children who are already above the age of 18 but have filled in a much younger age on paper so that they can start at the ISK instead of starting at higher education.

“There is an advantage when you apply here when you are 17 because then you are already in the system of the ISK. I will then arrange things like a school for you. While someone who comes here when they are already 18, cannot start anymore. They have a way more difficult time because they have to find out all these things alone. For example: where can I get Dutch language classes? They miss this “warm bath” (...) It also explains why we sometimes see 17-year-olds of who we think, you are already a few years older.” (Teacher at ISK)

UAM state that they found the help of their guardian till the age of 18 also really valuable during their time at school. The fact that they lose all these forms of support significantly impacts their well-being and school performance. The following quote shows this.

“Yes, with school that is good. They can contact the school in case something is unclear or good. They act just like your parents. When you have a problem, or you are being bullied, or there is a parent-teacher conference. They do all these things for you. But as soon as you turn 18 years, oke bye. You have to do all these things by yourself. Also, when you have problems at school. They are not there for you.” (Sudanese refugee, 23 years)

The two examples above show that UAMs do not only have to switch schools and leave the “warm bath” of the ISK once they turn 18 years old but that they at the same time also lose their guardian who helped them with school-related issues. These losses are harsh because of the already limited scale of social support that UAMs have.

8.2 Economic impacts

In addition to social consequences, there appear to be many economic consequences when turning 18. These consequences are also seen as complex and hard to deal with for UAMs who turn 18. The most named economic changes are documented in the following quote.

“After that, you actually have to pay a lot. And arrange a lot of documents. That was really difficult for me” Documents for student finance, public transport pass, health insurance. It gets more. A lot of things actually. But it is really difficult” “I had to do this all by myself.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

The fact that UAMs must arrange student finance was appointed by all respondents as extremely difficult. There are four explanations which make these changes difficult, according to the respondents. Firstly, you must show much evidence when applying for student finance. An example is that you have to prove that your parents are not in the Netherlands, but UAMs find it almost impossible to find out how to get this sort of information. Secondly, the language used in the documents being sent to UAMs is considered difficult, formal and therefore hard to read and understand. The fact that Dutch is not the native language also plays a role in this. Thirdly, there is no help available when arranging these documents. UAMs feel like they had to do it all alone and often did not know where to hand in these documents. When one of the

respondents asked for help, she noted that no one could help her in this process. *“I did ask for a supervisor or contact person, but that was not possible.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)*

Furthermore, the fact that the respondents were unprepared did not help them during this process. Multiple respondents mentioned that they had no idea what awaited them. An example, written down in the quote below, shows that they must apply for health insurance within 48 hours once they turn 18. These sudden changes are challenging because, as the quotes below describe, none of the participants knew what they could expect once turning 18.

“I was not aware that I had to arrange health insurance. Suddenly they said to me at ISK: congratulations you are 18 years old now you will get health insurance” I said: Health insurance? Yes, you have to request this in 48 hours.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

“I was nervous for the documents and paperwork. I thought this is going to be difficult.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

“In the beginning I actually thought that it would be normal, like the same as when you are 17.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

8.3 Cultural impacts

There do not appear to be many direct cultural consequences once UAMs turn 18. Besides that, UAMs have to switch schools once turning 18. But two cultural factors influence how UAM experience the transition to adulthood. The first cultural factor that plays a role in language. All the respondents mentioned that missing language skills made their transition to turning 18, and the indirect consequences were way more complicated because they did not speak the language well enough. One respondent mentioned that she felt scared sometimes because she did not want to do anything wrong and get in trouble.

“I was always scared to do something wrong. But sometimes you really should not make mistakes.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

Besides this, there is another cultural factor, namely that, as said before, UAMs get a lot more responsibilities. One of these is that they start to live independently and get their own living space. One respondent called this transition especially difficult because he knew nothing

about the Dutch rules, as in the quote below. This is an example of the cultural differences that influence their transition.

“Because when you turn 18, you get a sort of house from the municipality. They are responsible for you. And then you get a house, but you know nothing about the Dutch rules.” (Sudanese refugee, 23 years)

9. Structural barriers during the transition to adulthood

What are the structural barriers UAMs face as they transition from youth to adulthood?

Besides changing policies, structural barriers can also impact the way UAMs experience the transition to adulthood. In this chapter, an overview of the most common and impactful obstacles will be analyzed.

9.1 Language

Most respondents mentioned that the main structural barrier that hindered them in their transition to adulthood was that they experienced difficulties because they could not speak the Dutch language well enough.

“In the beginning, it was difficult to travel in the Netherlands or to go to another city. “How you can use the train. That was really difficult. But not anymore.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

The first two years really were not good. After that it got better.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

The quote above shows an example of the limitations that UAMs experience because they do not speak the Dutch language and are not used to daily life in the Netherlands yet. As the respondents mentioned, only two years later, the respondent mentions that life did finally get better. This inability to travel anywhere and the sense of fear that UAMs experience often arose during informal conversations and interviews. This fear could be related to the fact that many of the UAMs I spoke with do not have many contacts or an extensive social network. Furthermore, do they mainly only communicate with peers in Arabic, at school, for example. Secondly, many respondents said that the Netherlands did not feel like their home at first and that this process took quite a long time.

9.2 Social network

Building a social network is not made easy for UAMs either. Especially when UAMs are awaiting their asylum procedure. Multiple respondents mentioned how difficult it was for them to build a social network and build close relationships and how this negatively affected them. The quote below shows several factors that play a role in the inability of UAMs to build a social network.

“That is not good. Because you get to know new people and then you have to leave. When I met many people in Amersfoort, I had to move to Geleen. And Geleen to Utrecht is not an hour or so. And I do not have enough money to do that, go there by train (...) Every time you start a life somewhere, and then you have to leave again. That was not nice. When you move to a place in the neighbourhood then you can meet people, built trust and friendships and you get more open then.” (Sudanese refugee, 23 years)

Because of this lack of a social network and support, all the UAMs that participated in this research mentioned that they had experienced feelings of loneliness during their transition to adulthood. Some respondents were also scared they would not make friends at their new school. There is also a lot of sadness and incomprehension because of the inability to build a social network and leave friends behind. Besides this, the absence of their guardian during this challenging period also made them feel abandoned.

“No, they cannot be there for you. I just needed him. But he does not have time. He was on holiday for example. I want to meet with them because I feel unsafe. But he does not have time. He is just overrun with people. One person has to guide 50 people or something, I do not know how many. But that is just not nice.” (Sudanese refugee, 23 years)

Even when UAMs felt unsafe, they could not rely on the help of their guardian. This came up more often during the interviews and informal talks with UAMs. The teacher of the ISK also confirmed this impression. She states the following:

“They are often more involved. A coach of Nidos has a lot of youngsters who they have to drive to everyone. So, they are less accessible too. And indeed, at “Vluchtelingenwerk” they get one person, and he is really going to do their best for them.” (Teacher at ISK)

These two examples show that UAMs experience a difference in the quality and frequency of the guidance they receive. There appear primarily negative thoughts about the guidance that UAMs received till they became 18. Multiple respondents also mentioned that their guardians did not help them in their transition to adulthood. More positive thoughts are shared about the local organization of “Vluchtelingenwerk”, which is active in the municipality of Utrecht. It must be noted that Vluchtelingenwerk takes over the guidance of the UAM once they turn 18, but this is only the case in the municipality of Utrecht. In other cities and regions, the municipality where the UAM lives is responsible for their guidance. In most cases, this means

there is less support compared to the guidance that Vluchtelingenwerk in Utrecht is offering. Some of the respondents also confirm this.

“I get help from Vluchtelingenwerk. In other cities, this is not the case.” (Sudanese refugee, 23 years)

9.3 Racism

The last structural barrier that the respondents mentioned is the experience of racism. One respondent said he experienced racism regularly during his transition to adulthood. The following quote shows how he responded to this situation.

“I just stay calm; I actually do nothing. Because I am not in my own country, so I can actually do nothing. When for example, that man went to the police. He pressed charges for nothing. But the police will believe him. They will not believe me because it is not my country. Nothing will change about this. I just stay calm because I cannot do anything.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

What stands out in this example is that the respondent experiences a feeling of powerlessness. He feels he cannot do anything about this situation because, as he states, “he is not in his own country”.

10. Resilience among unaccompanied minor refugees

What do UAMs do to overcome the obstacles they face during emerging adulthood?

The previous chapters gave an overview of the obstacles and changes that UAMs experience during their transition to adulthood. In other words, the two threats described in the conceptual framework (changing policies and everyday structural barriers) have been analyzed in the previous chapters. In this chapter, the Re-active and pro-active capacities will be studied. Secondly, the actions that UAMs take to overcome these obstacles will be analyzed, or as mentioned in the conceptual framework, the resilience strategies.

10.1 Learn the language

Many of the above obstacles that UAMs experience can be linked to the fact that they do not speak the Dutch language good enough. One of the actions that several UAMs took to overcome this obstacle is that they started to work more to practice the Dutch language.

“At work your language will improve fast. I work more so that I can learn the language better. Because school actually does nothing. Because at school we have an Arabic and Dutch class. They are not together, so I cannot learn Dutch there.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

The above quote shows that UAMs are willing to learn the language to make their life easier. Besides these extra working hours, UAMs also take other actions to improve their vocabulary. Some UAMs have already started learning the Dutch language while still in their home country by watching YouTube videos. Once they arrived in the Netherlands, the practice and study to master the Dutch language intensified. Some respondents started to learn the language in their spare time at home. At the same time, others take the initiative to contact their school to ask if they can be put in a class with Dutch people. These initiatives eventually all serve the same goal: learning the Dutch language better to make life easier in the future. The resilience strategy, as described above, is a form of Re-active capacity. UAMs can adjust to the adverse conditions they experience, which are caused by the fact that they cannot speak or read the language well enough. To overcome these challenges, they start learning the language in their spare time, which is a process of adjusting to difficult situations to make them better eventually.

10.2 Help of a support system

What comes forth out of the interviews is that it seems impossible to do the whole transition to adulthood on your own. Especially during this challenging time where many changes occur for UAMs, a support system is essential. When respondents were asked about what they did to overcome difficult situations during their transition to adulthood, they mentioned that the people around helped them to cancer these situations.

“I have a lot of people who helped me. They are really good, and they know a lot of things about Dutch society and the Dutch system. They really helped me.” (Sudanese refugee, 23 years)

UAMs refer to people in this quote are friends, employees of Vluchtelingenwerk, roommates and teachers. Despite all these forms of help, UAM still experiences problems. Examples are UAMs who receive fines or letters that are difficult to read. Without the help of the supervisors of Vluchtelingenwerk or roommates, UAMS mentioned that they would get in trouble because they do not know how to oversee these situations. Once again, language also plays a role in this. Building a social network and support system is an example of Pro-active capacity. UAMs experience that they cannot handle difficult and complex situations alone and therefore build a social network around them to support them during these difficult times. Doing this creates options and possibilities to overcome certain setbacks and make life easier. For example, because of the help of “Vluchtelingenwerk,” most participants could arrange health insurance by themselves and can now do this every year themselves.

10.3 Learn from difficult moments

Some respondents have used the absence of a support system during their transition to adulthood to develop themselves further. They mention that they have learned a lot of lessons during this time in their life and that they have learned to make choices independently.

“My language gets better because I read many letters. Now I am used to answering these.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

“It is nice. I really learnt a lot. I can work independently now. I really work more independent than in the past. That is the result of these things.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

The two quotes above show a lot of perseverance among UAMs and a strong willingness to develop themselves. Despite the difficulties they faced due to the economic changes, once

they turned 18, they could turn it into something positive and show personal growth. They also could have chosen to give up and accept the situation. But what characterizes UAMs is that they can fight back. Several causes for these high forms of resilience among UAMs are collected during the data collection process.

“Now I understand, for every problem, there is always a solution. You never hear that there is a problem without a solution. Always. No matter how big the problem is.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

“I do not think in problems. Because you know, everything in my life has played a role. But I throw everything away. Because I have to find a new way. I have to build on a new future. That is where I think about. I always try to make my own future plans.” (Syrian refugee, 20 years)

The two quotes above show that despite the difficult past these children had, they show a lot of resilience. They can think in solutions when situated in challenging times. The teacher at the ISK also confirms that she notices high forms of resilience among her students. An example she gave is a girl who was really angry in the first period she came to the ISK because she was still with her mind in Eritrea, busy with family reunification. But gradually, she started to go to school more often. Now she follows higher education and works at the Albert Heijn. This was one of the examples that she mentioned, but this was certainly not the only case whereby she noticed resilience among students.

When one of the respondents was asked about the difficulties that appeared once they turned 18 years old, she mentioned the following:

“I always say to myself, you have experienced much more difficult situations than these. You can also fix this. So actually, my past is difficult, but sometimes it gives me energy.”

This quote again confirms these high forms of resilience among UAMs. Their ability to learn from difficult moments and to use this as a learning process is an example of Pro-active capacity. UAMs have the power to use the difficult situation they were in once turning 18 into a learning moment that they can use later during emerging adulthood.

11. Discussion

In this research, the resilience strategies that UAMs develop based on the changes that occur once they turn 18 years old have been brought to the fore through interviews, analysis of informal conversations, and secondary data analysis. The results will be discussed and interpreted based on the conceptual framework and the literature in chapters 2 and 3. Firstly, the debate on the transition to adulthood for UAMs will be discussed. Secondly, the resilience strategies that UAMs develop will be linked to the broader discussion about resilience among refugees. Finally, it will be examined how this thesis adds to the present academic debates in the field of Development Studies.

11.1 Economic, social and cultural changes once turning 18

In the literature review, it was discussed how it is recognized that many changes occur in the field of policy for UAMs who turn 18 (Lyamouri-Bajja, UNHCR, & the Council of Europe Youth Department, 2014). This research confirms this image. All the respondents noticed impactful changes in their life once turning 18, mainly caused by policy changes. Social impacts, including the loss of a guardian, are seen as difficult periods in the life of UAMs. This confirms the theory of Honkasalo (2016). As already stated in the literature review chapter, he says that the “waitinghood”, the period wherein someone loses their guardian, is considered the most intolerable experience. This negative experience is caused by the feeling of anxiety and uncertainty caused by the loss of a guardian once turning 18. In all the interviews, feelings of sadness and fear were brought up when discussing the loss of a guardian. Honkasalo (2016) also states that losing a guardian leads to UAMs having trouble integrating into a new country. In this research, no direct connection is made between losing a guardian and the degree to which UAMs integrate into the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the results of this research show two different phases where in UAMs integrate. During the first phase of emerging adulthood, especially the moment when UAMs turn 18, the feeling of integration is relatively low. The main reason for this is that the daily rhythm of UAMs is disrupted due to the social and economic changes that occur, for example, losing their guardian. Honkasalo (2016) states that this interruption troubles the integration process. In the second phase of emerging adulthood, when UAMs have developed resilience strategies to deal with the changes named earlier, the integration process improves and accelerates. Different

participants also mention this. They say that they now see the Netherlands as their home, which was not the case when they were 18. It must be noted that the fact that the integration process intensifies the longer UAMs are in the Netherlands could be the result of the fact that they have been longer in the Netherlands. And therefore could adapt better to the life here.

Besides the fact that the loss of a guardian can limit the integration process, Pasic (2020), also states that guardians and social workers play a significant role as they offer support and assistance to UAMs. This research supports this theory. All the participants felt lonely when they lost their guardians once they turned 18. They could not count on the guardian's assistance, which they needed at that specific moment.

11.2 Structural Barriers

One structural barrier mentioned in the interviews was that racism played a role in the daily life of several participants. This was something that was not yet taken into consideration as a structural barrier in the theoretical and conceptual framework. According to the research of Oxfam (2021), UAMs often face racism and discrimination in the labour and housing market. One of the respondents indicated that he felt powerless when he experienced forms of racism in his daily life. The main reason for this feeling of powerlessness is that he, at that moment, saw the Netherlands, not as his home country. This is an example of a structural barrier whereby UAMs do not develop any resilience strategies because they do not see how they can improve this specific situation. The feeling of powerlessness also contributes to the inability to develop resilience strategies.

Another structural barrier where UAMs have no impact on are the many movements between asylum centres. Because of the centralized systems, UAMs often have to move regularly to remote parts of the country, according to the research of Lyamouri-Bajja & the Council of Europe Youth Department (2014). The findings of this research agree with this theory. UAMs experience the many movements between asylum centres as unnecessary and burdensome. What makes it difficult is that UAMs have to build a new social network every time they move. This hinders a fast integration and makes the transition to adulthood difficult because UAMs experience a lot of instability during this time, which can negatively influence their development during emerging adulthood.

11.3 Resilience strategies

The findings confirm the theory of Rodriguez & Dobler (2021) that UAMs have the ability to develop several resilience strategies to overcome setbacks in their life. The results of this study show three resilience strategies that UAMs develop to overcome the difficult changes once they turn 18. Besides the changing policies that influence the life of UAMs, Baija (2014) also states that the transition to adulthood is shaped by many factors such as social, economic, and cultural changes. As already said, these social, economic, and cultural changes impact UAMs the most once they turn 18.

“Resilience is seen as a dynamic process, not as a state (ecology) or a trait (psychology), and may change over time. (Adger, 2003, p.2.)

As stated in the citation above, Adger (2003) describes resilience as a dynamic process. This is also the case for the resilience strategies analyzed in this research. The resilience strategies of UAMs were not developed in a short period. Still, it cost multiple months before UAMs were able to adapt to the changes once turning 18 and to develop resilience strategies to make their life eventually better. This is also evident when looking at the two phases of emerging adulthood that can be identified. In the first phase, the resilience strategies have not yet been developed. While in the second phase, a couple of years after turning 18, different resilience strategies can be identified.

11.4 Reflection: influence of biases

It must be taken into consideration that the sample size of this research is relatively small. Therefore the data cannot be generalized. Besides this, because snowball sampling was used to find respondents, there is a possibility that a one-sided image is created. Therefore there is no guarantee that the collected data is representative for all UAMs in Utrecht. This approach is particularly prone to bias in the sampling process. All participants may share certain characteristics, regardless of the characteristics the research seeks to evaluate, because participants are picked by those who have previously been selected. As a result, the sampling will only reach one segment of the investigated population (Ochoa, 2017).

Another potential bias could occur because some participants could not express themselves wholly in Dutch. Firstly this could have led to misunderstandings, whereby the participants did not know how to answer the question. Secondly, a few times, the participant could not answer the questions in Dutch. In these cases, the participant used Google Translate to answer the

questions. There is a possibility that the translation was not accurate, and this could potentially have influenced the results gathered from the interviews and participatory observations.

The last potential limitation of this research could be the consequence of my positionality as a researcher. As mentioned earlier in the methodology chapter, I was uncomfortable asking about sensitive topics during the first two interviews. This was mainly caused by the fact that I felt like “an outsider” because I had never had to flee in my life. During the last three interviews, this feeling diminished. But during the participatory observations, I found it still difficult to ask through on sensitive topics, like, for example, how it is living without a family when growing up. This was especially the case because I spoke with them while sitting in a group. My positionality and way of interviewing during the participatory observations could have biased the results because sensitive topics were not always discussed in depth.

11.5 Reflection in the field of Development Studies

There are various reasons why this thesis complements the current academic literature in the field of Development Studies. Most importantly, the data provide new evidence that UAMs have the ability to develop resilience strategies despite the problematic changes that occur once they turn 18. It adds to earlier research by Sleijpen, Mooren, Kleber & Boeije (2017), which showed that the available support systems and transitions faced over time could cause vulnerability or result in resilience strategies. Besides the addition to the academic literature, this thesis also contributes to the current debate on the difficult transition to adulthood for UAMs in the Netherlands. As stated earlier, there is currently a lot of media attention on the topic. Mainly because of the newest report of “De Nationale Ombudsman” (2022). This report discusses the opposing sides of Dutch policies regarding the transition to turning 18. This is also the case in this thesis, but what this thesis adds to the current debate is the more positive side and the strength of UAMs. This strength and willpower are visible in the resilience strategies that UAMs develop during their transition to adulthood.

11.6 Implications for further research

Future studies using a larger sample size are recommended to confirm the generalizability of the findings because of the small sample size of the research, which consisted of only five in depth-interviews with UAM and one expert. Therefore, the results of this thesis cannot be used to make general conclusions about the resilience strategies that UAMs develop. What

makes the data valuable is that due to the small sample size, there was a possibility to get an accurate and broad insight into the lives of UAMs, but because of this, no general conclusions can be drawn. For that reason, conducting future research on a larger scale would be recommended to verify whether the same resilience strategies will occur or whether the research sample has influenced these strategies.

Secondly, besides the larger scale, that would be recommended for future research. It would also be helpful to do the same study in another municipality in the Netherlands. As some respondents mentioned, more help was received when living in the city of Utrecht because of the services of “Vluchtelingenwerk”. They are currently only offering this support in the municipality of Utrecht, and since all the participants are now living in Utrecht, it might influence the results. It would therefore be recommended to do the same study in another municipality in the Netherlands to identify whether the same outcomes will occur.

Thirdly, to avoid biases, a large sample where more female respondents are participating would be recommended. In this research sample, 80 percent of the participants were male. This might have influenced the results, and it might be interesting to research whether other resilience strategies would occur when doing this research with only female participants.

12. Conclusion

What dimensions shape the life of unaccompanied minor refugees in the Netherlands once they turn 18 years old and what resilience strategies do they develop during emerging adulthood?

In conclusion, there can be said that the economic and social dimensions shape the life of unaccompanied minor refugees the most. Firstly, the economic changes, such as arranging student finance and applying for health insurance once turning 18, cause several problems for UAMs and tend to shape their life negatively. What makes these economic changes even more difficult is that UAMs do not speak the Dutch language well enough to read the documents they have to fill in. Secondly, the changes that appear in the social dimension also influence their life. Especially the loss of all the support, including their guardian, once turning 18 influences their life drastically. Besides these two factors that change once they turn 18, there are also structural barriers during their transition to adulthood that greatly influence their life. Especially the lack of a vast social network, experiences of racism and the inability to speak the Dutch language well, tend to affect their life and the way they experience emerging adulthood. What characterizes UAMs the most is their ability to overcome the challenges mentioned above. This research has shown that they can turn these social and economic setbacks they experienced once they turned 18 years into something positive later in life. There are three main resilience strategies that UAMs developed to overcome the challenges during emerging adulthood. Firstly, by learning the Dutch language, they were able to handle the difficult situations in their life better. They are now able to read documents in Dutch and thereby create a higher degree of independence. Secondly, build a social network that can help them in difficult times. When the support system fell away once turning 18, UAMs were able to develop their own support system later on during emerging adulthood. Thirdly, they have the ability to learn from their mistakes and difficulties in their past and always look with optimism at the future. They know how to find a way, to use these difficulties as a learning moment and to develop themselves during the second phase of emerging adulthood. This is what makes them unique; being able to not forget their past but to use it as a springboard to a better future.

12.1 Policy recommendations

In the previous chapter, suggestions for further research are proposed. Besides the importance of this topic in the academic field, more attention to the transition to adulthood for UAMs should be paid in policies. Therefore, different policy recommendations will be proposed in this chapter, based on the literature and data collected during the interviews.

Firstly, extend the legal right to a guardian for UAMs till they turn 21 years old. Most of the participants mentioned that it was a brutal shock for them when they lost the support of their guardians once they turned 18 years, while this was especially the time when they needed help from them. As some of the participants mentioned, which is supported by literature, it would be beneficial for UAMs to receive the support of a guardian till they reach the age of 21. In this way, the guardian can help them with the changes that occur once they turn 18, making the transition to adulthood easier and less stressful for UAMs.

Secondly, at the ISK, more attention should be paid to the changes that occur once turning 18. All the participants mentioned that they were not prepared for the changes that were about to happen. The interview with the ISK teacher confirmed that little to no attention is being paid to this subject. It will help UAMs if they receive more information at school. Besides this, it would also be helpful if teachers at the ISK would gather more information so that UAMs can come to them with simple questions.

Thirdly, it would be helpful to make a website where common questions regarding turning 18 as a UAM in the Netherlands are answered. Guardians and teachers at the ISK can direct UAMs with questions to this website. This website must be accessible in different languages since most participants mention that they still struggle with reading letters and documents in Dutch.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Interview guide

The interview should take about 30-40 minutes

Before the start of the interview I will discuss the following topics with the participant:

- Introduction: who am I
- Purpose of the study
- What does NDC do
- Interview regulations and letter of consent
- Signing of the agreement
- Creating a safe room before we start the interview

Parts of the interview	Questions/topics
Part 1: Background information	What is your age? What is your gender? What is your nationality? In which year did you arrive in the Netherlands?
Part 2: General information about the respondent and introduction	Can you tell me about your journey to the Netherlands? Probes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Did you travel directly to the Netherlands or where there transit countries were you stayed?○ How long did this journey take?○ Was it easy to come here? Difficult? How does your life look like right now? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Probes:○ On the field of studying?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment? ○ Living alone? ○ With friends? <p>Could you share your current legal status? (If you feel comfortable to share this)</p> <p>How do you feel about reaching the age of eighteen? (In case already 18): How did you experience the transition of turning 18?</p> <p>Did you undergo an age assessment? If so, could you tell me about how you experienced the process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Was it intimidating? ○ Was it easy or challenging?
<p>Part 3: The situation before turning 18</p>	<p>Could you tell me about your life before turning 18?</p> <p>Access to social rights (for example: housing, guardian, education)</p> <p>Was there any social support from friends, family, or guardian?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Was there support regarding education? ○ Housing situation <p>How did you experience adapting to the life in the Netherlands?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Making friends ○ Finding hobbies ○ Learning the Dutch language <p>Does the Netherlands feel as home?</p> <p>What did help you in this transition/process?</p>

	<p>What information did you have about how law regulation change once you turn 18?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Were you well informed? ○ Little/no information?
<p>Part 4: Preparation/transition to adulthood</p>	<p>What is adulthood? What does it mean for you?</p> <p>Were you prepared to reach adulthood once you turned 18? Why yes or no?</p> <p>Were you well prepared to turn 18 here?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Financially? ○ Psychologically? ○ Who helped you with it? <p>Was there a place/people were you can go to with questions that you had regarding turning 18 and becoming an adult?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Changing circumstances? ○ Housing? ○ Changing rights? <p>What does turning 18 in your home country mean? Rituals/changes?</p> <p>How did you experience the transition of turning 18?</p> <p>What did you fear the most about becoming adult?</p> <p>What did you look forward the most in becoming an adult?</p>

<p>Part 5: Turning 18</p>	<p>Were there consequences of turning 18 in your social life?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Relationships with friends? ○ Relationships with family? ○ Relationship with guardian? <p>Was there an impact on your economic situation?</p> <p>Was there an impact on your education/school life?</p> <p>Did you feel recognized and honoured during this transition? By friends, family, guardians?</p> <p>What emotions come up in your mind when you think back on this period in your life?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Happiness ○ Sadness/anger ○ Relief
<p>Part 6: After turning 18</p>	<p>How did you deal with the changes in your life?</p> <p>Which steps did you take to overcome these changes/challenges in your life? Did it get better?</p> <p>Did anyone/an organization help you in the period between the age of 18 till 25?</p> <p>What went well during this period?</p> <p>What could have helped you in this period in your life?</p>

	<p>In what sense/how is your life different now in comparison with when you turned 18?</p>
<p>Part 7: Recommendations</p>	<p>What policy changes would be beneficial for people facing the same situation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Policies in the Netherlands? ○ Policies in the European Union? <p>What were good practices that you experienced?</p>
<p>Part 8: Closing questions?</p>	<p>Are there any other important topics that we missed and should discuss?</p> <p>How do you see the future?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probes: ○ Positive/negative? ○ Ambitions? <p>What are your dreams for the future?</p> <p>Thank you for your time!</p>

Appendix 2: Interview guide with expert

Interviewvragen experts

Parts of the interview	Questions/topics
Basic info	<p>Hoeveel leerlingen zitten er op de ISK?</p> <p>Op welke leeftijd starten de meeste leerlingen op de ISK?</p> <p>Blijven de meeste leerlingen tot dat ze 18 jaar zijn op de ISK?</p> <p>Wat gaan de meeste leerlingen doen nadat ze 18 jaar zijn geworden?</p>
	<p>Waar richt jullie begeleiding en ondersteuning zich vooral op?</p> <p>Met wie werken jullie samen bij de overgang van de begeleiding van amv's die 18 jaar worden? (Wat gaat er goed in deze samenwerking, en wat kan er nog beter?)</p> <p>Hoe ervaar jij de begeleiding met de leerlingen? (Is dit intensief)</p> <p>Wat verandert er precies voor een amv-er op school gerelateerd gebied bij de overgang naar 18 jaar?</p> <p>Hoe worden amv's voorbereid op deze overgang? (Wat kan er beter in dit proces?)</p> <p>Komen leerlingen ook naar jou toe met andere vragen naast school gerelateerde zaken? (vb. brieven, regelen van studiefinanciering etc)</p> <p>Merk je dat leerlingen problemen ervaren tijdens de overgang naar 18 jaar?</p> <p>Ervaar jij dat de leerlingen op hun 18^{de} klaar zijn voor deze veranderingen? (Zijn ze op dit moment al "volwassen" in jouw ogen?) (Op financieel/sociaal vlak)</p>

Behoeftesamenwerking	Wat hebben docenten/ISK nodig om de overgang van amv's naar 18 jaar zo soepel mogelijk te laten verlopen?
Resilienceveerkracht	<p>Ervaar je als docent op de ISK een hoge mate veerkracht onder deze jongeren?</p> <p>Hoe herken je dit? Kan je hier een voorbeeld van noemen?</p>
Closing questions	<p>Wat zou er verbeterd kunnen worden om de overgang naar 18 jaar makkelijker te maken? Aanbevelingen?</p>

Appendix 3: Code trees

