**Edited by
Kristiina Brunila
& Lisbeth Lundahl**

Youth on the Move

**Tendencies
and Tensions
in Youth Policies
and Practices**

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Introduction

Kristiina Brunila and Lisbeth Lundahl

Youth on the move—Tendencies and tensions in youth policies and practices[1] addresses one of the most urgent social problems today—that of the extended and uncertain transitions from school to work and higher education, and how they shape the interests of young adults,[2] including those outside of education and work. The book combines perspectives from policies and practices, as well as from young people themselves. It critically examines the 'transition machinery' that has emerged to put youth on the move in very specific ways, to manage and govern students, trainees and young jobseekers, and consists of various education and training measures, preparatory programmes, support systems, short-term projects and schemes. When lack of education and unemployment are treated as individual problems, personal deficiencies or identity issues, the solutions are likewise individualized. The book shows how youth transitions are intertwined with and shaped by social differences; they are for example related to gender, health, social class and ethnicity, but also to geographical location. School-to-work transitions, as politics, practices and discourses, are important to examine closely because they shape the conduct of young people and their intentions and possibilities.

Heading for what future?

In the 2010s, European young adults on average have more years of education than any other youth generation, and hence should be better qualified and have better future prospects than ever before. For many of them, however, this is hardly the situation. A general trend towards increasingly extended, fragmented and uncertain school-to-work transitions has been prominent over the last decades (Colley, 2007; Dwyer & Wyn, 2006; Pohl & Walther, 2007). Today, a rather gloomy picture emerges from research and official reports, e.g. by state authorities, the European Union and the OECD. Youth unemployment rose markedly as a result of the recession that followed after the financial crisis in 2008–09 and has remained at high levels in many countries. In the European Union on average every sixth young adult aged 20–34 in 2017 was neither employed nor in education or training (so-called NEET)—in Italy and Greece almost every third (Eurostat, 2018a). In the UK, people in their twenties were worst hit by the crisis compared to other age groups in terms of unemployment, pay and incomes (Hills et al., 2013, p. 6). Similar patterns have been found in most other countries. This situation is deeply worrying from individual and societal perspectives, since spells of unemployment leave long-term scars, e.g. in terms of lowered life incomes and health conditions, and amplifies social segregation and exclusion (Scarpetta, Sonnet & Manfredi, 2010; Scarpetta & Sonnet, 2012. Also see Barslund & Gros, 2017).

It is important to recognize that the transition to adult and working life exposes considerably larger proportions of young people to difficult living conditions than have already been described. The percentage of youths aged 20–24 years who are temporarily employed is far higher than among older adults: approximately 40% in the European Union and considerably above that level in countries such as Poland, Portugal, Italy and Spain (60% or more in 2017; Eurostat, 2018b). Youth poverty is considerably more widespread in Europe than is usually acknowledged, and young people are more likely to experience recurrent poverty than older adults are. Fahmy (2007, p. 54) concludes that poverty is 'not confined to a small minority of "socially excluded" young people, but is very common for Europe's young people at various points in their transitions to adulthood'.

In this conjuncture, strategies and measures to make the transitions from school to work less protracted and risky are placed high on local, national and supranational policy agendas. Raising the levels of secondary school completion and minimizing the numbers of NEETs, modernizing vocational training and education and fostering young people's 'employability' have become central components, e.g. in policies and recommendations of the European Union and the OECD (Brunila et al., 2017; European Commission, 2018; Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014). A multitude of authorities and forces, a veritable 'transition machinery', has emerged to render young

adults governable and employable in their constant transitions as students, trainees and jobseekers.

In the contemporary era of the knowledge economy or knowledge capitalism, the welfare state has taken on a new active role in relation to the economy; a 'competition state' that seeks to enhance economic growth by supporting enterprise, flexibility and innovation has developed (Ball, 2007).

The welfare sector and not least education, which traditionally had relative autonomy vis-à-vis the economy, are now closely linked to economic and labour market policies (Apple et al., 2005; Jessop et al., 2008). Neo-liberalism—a political ideology and governing rationality with the individual, freedom of choice and safeguarding of the market as their cornerstones—permeates the global social imaginary of education.

Simultaneously, however, the marketization and commercialization of education mean a weakened relationship to the state and increasing subordination to the market and its instruments, such as performance indicators, accountability, rankings and responsibilization of the individual (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009).

Discourses on youth and transitions highlight certain aspects and problem representations while others are silenced or shadowed (Bacchi, 2009). Hence, the discourses on youth transitions do not simply *describe* young adults but *create* them, not only as objects but also as subjects, due to the way in which they can also influence the individual's sense of self. For example, new labels of psychological and emotional deficiency of young adults who fail to make successful transitions from school to work will serve to isolate and blame them for their inadequacies. When lack of education and unemployment are treated as individual problems, personal or identity issues rather than as institutional failures and structural deficits, the solutions are likewise individualized. Therefore, a critical reconceptualization of the cross-sectoral policies and practices of transitions is called for. Transitions in this book are understood not as developmental, natural and self-evident processes but as intertwined with social differences such as gender, health, social class and ethnicity.

The next part of this chapter is devoted to three different problem representations, two of which are common in current youth policies and practices, the third to a lesser extent. The first problem representation, that of a supposed lack of 'the right competences' (knowledge, skills, dispositions) of young persons, and commonly proposed solutions to this problem, is discussed first. The second problem representation, closely related to the first, is about young people's alleged lack of motivation to complete academic and vocational education, lack of enterprise and passivity in jobseeking, that is, a range of psychological and personal weaknesses and deficiencies, and the remedies are designed accordingly. The third problem representation concerns the limited structural possibilities for young people to have an influence on education, work and society. The last part of the introductory chapter gives an overview of the structure and contents of the rest of the book.

Focus on employability, entrepreneurship and active jobseeking

The steadily increasing demands of designing education, training and employment schemes in ways that enhance competitiveness and economic growth, and the growing population of young adults who have no or only weak connections to the labour market, have turned lacking employability and entrepreneurship into prime problem representations at different policy levels. The concept of employability is not new, but its meaning has changed over time. In the 1950s, 60s and 70s, 'employability' mainly denoted achievement of full employment, while in the 1980s it was related to companies' needs for flexible staff in a rapidly changing environment. Gradually, and in particular from the 1990s, the focus shifted to concern the individual's ability to get and to maintain a job. Now career making and employability have mainly become the responsibility of the individual, related to the 'new psychological contract' between employers and employees (Forrier & Sels, 2003). On the one hand, the responsibility of education and training institutions to foster employable youth has been underscored to a higher extent than before, but individuals are also expected to be proactive in building up their CVs in order to make themselves attractive to potential employers. What is silenced to a large extent in this problem representation is that huge numbers of jobs that traditionally served as entry-level jobs for young people have disappeared due to industrial restructuring and outsourcing to low-salary countries. New job opportunities, e.g. in computer and communication firms, often require more special skills and higher academic qualifications, and are offered as temporary employments.

In the early 2000s, fostering children and young people to become enterprising became a major issue in a range of countries and at the European level. By 2012, about 20 EU countries had launched entrepreneurship education as part of their national lifelong learning or youth strategies (European Commission, 2012; Mononen Batista-Costa & Brunila, 2016). Entrepreneurship education is seen as a vital instrument in forming young people's attitudes and behaviours in line with industry's and society's need for self-governing, innovative and productive individuals and the creation of a true 'entrepreneurial culture'. According to the European Commission,

> There is a growing awareness of the potential of young people to launch and develop their own commercial or social ventures thereby becoming innovators in the areas in which they live and work. Entrepreneurship education is essential not only to shape the mind-sets of young people but also to provide the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are central to developing an entrepreneurial culture. (European Commission, 2016, p. 9)

Moreover, youths starting their own firms are also seen as an answer to the underlying problem of too few available jobs.

The 'job first' principle, or activation line, i.e. demands on unemployed and recipients of social benefits to actively seek jobs, has spread throughout Europe

during the last decades. For example, this principle was introduced in the Nordic countries in the 1990s and early 2000s (Kvist, 2003; Berthet & Bourgeois, 2014). The activation line implies an emphasis on mutual obligations, including the development of an individual action plan, as a precondition for receiving income support. The rationale for the activation line and introduction of mandatory individual action plans is not, however, necessarily only for economic reasons. Instead, it might be found in changed political ideas and interests rather than management of economic crisis. Newman (2007) concludes that 'activation measures can be understood as opening up more of the person to governmental power, requiring them to collaborate in the development of new subjective orientations to the worlds of work and welfare' (Newman, 2007, p. 3).[3]

One of the big changes that neo-liberalism as a governing rationality has brought about is transforming survival as individual, instead of social, responsibility. This tends to focus on economic survival linked to a set of specific skills, the capacity to earn money being the most important. To meet the demand of individual responsibility for economic survival, developing flexibility, responsiveness, and responsibility for oneself has become a necessity, or, rather, an *obligation* (Davies, 2005; McLaughlin, 2011). The demand of individual responsibility for economic survival goes hand in hand with a notion of employability understood as a set of 'correct' skills and characteristics that guarantee entry to the current highly competitive labour market (Brunila & Ryynänen, 2016). These skills include a requirement for individuals to constantly adapt to and manage changeable employer demands and flexible patterns of work and learning (Worth, 2003). Lack of employment is regarded as a lack of employability, that is, a personal deficiency of some kind that can be 'cured' by improving one's employability and by becoming more willing to adapt and manage changeable employer demands (Siivonen & Brunila, 2014).

Employability problems—individualized and therapeutic solutions

The young people in school-to-work transitions thus tend to be conceptualized as being psycho-emotionally vulnerable. Some of them might have a history of learning problems, but psycho-emotional vulnerability is also associated with people belonging to ethnic minority or other minority groups and those requiring special education or from migrant backgrounds. Young people from various backgrounds and outside education and working life tend to be constructed in policy either as 'vulnerable victims', 'troubling' or 'dangerous wrong-doers' and held fully responsible in situations where they transgress (Brown, 2014; Fionda, 2005; Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015).

In one sense, key concerns related to young people have changed very little over the decades. However, we seem currently to be witnessing a new more hybrid model of governing. Psychologically and therapeutically derived vocabulary, ideas, knowledge and implementations on education policy, teaching and

assessment practices seem to be extending both their reach and impact. Rooted in what is commonly described as the 'vulnerability zeitgeist' (Brown, 2014), 'age of vulnerability' (McLaughlin, 2011), or therapeutic ethos (Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015), wide-ranging remedies, ideas and disciplines have become increasingly popular in educational settings in many countries (McLeod, 2012; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2014; Petersen & Millei, 2016; Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015). These include (positive) psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy and other forms of therapeutic interventions, emotional literacy, psycho-emotional support systems, self-help, happiness training and counselling. In youth policies and practices, and especially in youth programmes that aim to educate and train unemployed young people, there is a tendency to develop individually oriented competences, skills and attributes of emotional skills, emotional management, resilience, self-responsibility, empathy and self-esteem. Increasingly, the whole transition machinery has been given a role helping young people cope with their personal difficulties in a way that is held to be empowering, a process through which they allegedly learn to deal with their emotions, which in turn is assumed to lead to social survival and, most importantly, coping in the labour market. The problem is that the language of emotional skills, competence and literacy disguises normative views about desirable attributes, attitudes and dispositions (Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015). The focus on individual responsibility risks hiding societal elements as determining contexts of youth transitions, and might result in young people being blamed by themselves or others for their failures (France, 2007, p. 71). At the same time, individualized interventions create new non-permanent, informal structures where public and private actors, operating outside their formal jurisdictions, become part of political institutions' decision-making processes.

What about young people themselves? Young people's influence and democratic citizenship

In spite of initiatives that promote equal and fair transitions, young people's own experiences and aspirations have remained invisible in policy and research to a large extent. Hierarchies between different forms of education, as well as between categorizations (e.g. based on gender, ethnicity, age, class and health) are reflected in whose voices are heard and listened to. If young people have been incorporated into policy processes, it is generally those considered high-achieving, self-responsible and entrepreneurial who are invited to take part (Bottrell & Armstrong, 2012). Several studies have found similar tendencies in schools (Beach & Dovemark, 2011; Lundahl & Olson, 2013).

It seems that more and more public sector areas, including educational policies and practices, are shifting towards strengthening the market-oriented approach and sustainability of hierarchical categorizations (Brunila, 2012). A taken-for-granted backdrop for students' choices includes norms concerning

societal differences such as age, gender, ethnicity/race, social class and health. Decisions that the young people make are constantly interpreted through the dominant discourses and the representations constructed within these discourses. In other words, students are encouraged to take the routes that are expected for 'their kind' (see also Brunila et al., 2013).

Researchers should pay more attention to the policies, cultures and practices through which young people are spoken of and speak about themselves. It is crucial to examine both tensions and fractions in these discourses, and uncover different ways to conduct research in terms of young people. We argue that, by focusing on the ways in which subjectivities of young people are constructed by policymakers, professionals such as teachers and youth workers, academic researchers, and young people themselves, some ideas and assumptions of problematic transitions and their taken-for-granted 'good intentions' could be challenged. Hence one of the aims of this book is to create more room for young people's interpretations, responses and actions in order to construct knowledge and understanding together with young people and stakeholders involved in school-to-work transitions.

This book illustrates the complexity and multidimensionality of young people's transitions within and from school to work and higher education. With the help of contributions we have chosen for this book we argue that there are even more persistent changes that are focusing on young people. These changes shape the ways in which young people are perceived and how they should perceive themselves both as psycho-emotionally vulnerable but also necessarily employable, resilient and competitive. In terms of the transition machinery, the question is not whether to intervene, but which type of governance is the most effective in producing and fostering suitably flexible youth subjectivities that could cope with insecurity. The machinery that puts youth on the move tends to promote a rather narrow, individualized, decontextualized and instrumentalist approach.

Thereby the book highlights the need to avoid determinist and totalizing accounts, (e.g. characterizing the mechanisms and consequences of transitions simply as emancipatory or repressive). We argue that transitions shape subjects and agency by encouraging or compelling young people to speak and act through the language and social relations of transitions while also allowing them to think about how they are 'reformed' by transitions, and how they constantly learn to act in these power relations, as well as to utilize them.

Structure and contents of the book

The rest of the book is structured in two parts that address first young people's own perspectives and then policies and official practices.

The first part, *Young people's trajectories and identities*, comprises five chapters on young people and young adults at the point of choosing future careers

or being in the process of transition from upper secondary to higher education or work. It is thus the young people/adults themselves and their experiences that form the core of the texts, based on either survey data or interviews with smaller groups of young people. The geographical contexts and migration status of the young people vary and make a difference, but gender, social class and ethnicity nevertheless constitute important categories in the analyses.

In Chapter 1, *Young citizenship—Academically high-achieving middle-class students in transitions talk about participation*, Maria Rönnlund departs from the dominant discourse of European citizenship education that celebrates individual agency, self-responsibility and self-regulation. The chapter focuses on high-achieving middle-class students who, at least from an outsider perspective, act and behave in accordance with these expectations. The analysis indicates that young people themselves predominantly take an individual view on subjectivity and suggests that failures are interpreted as 'personal' shortcomings, something that has implications for transitions into future labour and educational markets. This tendency towards focusing and blaming the individual will recur in most of the other chapters in this book.

Based on register data, the next two chapters analyse the trajectories of youth standing outside of education and the labour market. Chapter 2, *Social background and labour market careers of young people: A comparison of two cohorts of Finnish young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)*, by Tero Järvinen, aims to explore the consequences of early school leaving and being in the NEET category in the Finnish context. It critically evaluates the dominating assumption that being outside both education and the labour market after compulsory school is fatal to one's future life course and labour market chances in particular. While young people's school-to-work transitions and not least the NEET group has attracted increasing attention by politicians and scholars in many countries, research in this field has been rare in Iceland. Therefore Chapter 3, *Transition from school to work: Icelandic young people in NEET,* by Jóhanna Rósa Arnardottir, helps to fill a gap. It focuses on transitions from school to work among Icelandic young people and young adults, aged 16–34, not in employment, education or training. Education and the first job opportunities of the NEET group are compared to those of young people who study or are employed. The experience of transition in Iceland is also compared with the situation in the Nordic countries, the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain. Arnardottir concludes that lack of job opportunities is a major factor behind young people being in a NEET situation, rather than lacking talent or commitment to work. She underlines the importance of education, counselling and other support at an early stage to prevent young people ending up in a vicious circle of unemployment and temporary jobs.

With their qualitative approaches, Chapters 4 and 5 helps to deepen the understanding of the shaping of young adult's career trajectories from both agency and institutional perspectives. Chapter 4, *Winding paths through school and after—Young Swedes of migrant origin who failed in upper secondary school*,

by Michael Lindblad and Lisbeth Lundahl, aims to contribute to the understanding of young people's extended and problem-filled careers through school and after. The narratives of these 21- to 23-year-olds without complete upper secondary qualifications, most of them of non-European origin, show how scarce symbolic and economic capital, and schools' lack of support frameworks, shape the transitions of these young adults. Adult education, however, constitutes a positive turning point for many of them. Chapter 5, *'Learn skills and get employed'—Constituting the employable refugee subjectivity through integration policies and training practices*, by Ameera Masoud, Tuuli Kurki and Kristiina Brunila, looks at how integration policies and training practices shape the employable refugee subjectivity. The authors utilize a discursive approach in the analysis of the official documents of integration policies and practices, as well as interviews with young migrants (aged 20 to 35 years), integration training project managers, and teachers/trainers. They conclude that the dominant employability discourse serves to reduce refugees to a homogeneous group of 'not yet employable', regardless of their previous education, training and work skills and regardless of their interests—in fact, a reversed process of skilling.

The three chapters of Part II, *Young people's transitions: Policies and new forms of governing*, illuminate that policies and governing of youth transitions not only take place at different political levels but also are enacted by a range of actors and institutions and by more or less transparent technologies and discourses. Furthermore they underscore that youth/young adults is far from a homogenous category, and a central, although less apparent, function of governing is still to contribute to the channelling of young people to different positions in society.

Local policies constitute a highly important part of transition policies but are largely under-researched. Chapter 6, by Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours, *Young people and transitions in upper secondary education in England—The influence of policy on the 'local opportunity landscape'*, gives an important contribution in this respect. The chapter critically explores ways in which national policy on curriculum, qualifications, institutional accountability and governance impact on the opportunities for learners to progress within, and complete, English upper secondary education. The researchers conclude that top-down national policy levers have interacted with a local marketized environment of competing institutions—a policy landscape that England shares with many other countries—to behave in ways that may contribute to rather than counteract early school leaving.

Even short-term entrepreneurial and therapeutic education and training programmes in and outside formal educational institutions have been developed across Europe and constitute an increasingly important, but still underresearched part of the 'transition machinery'. Chapters 7 and 8 address these phenomena with somewhat different focuses and contexts. In Chapter 7 *Economic worries—therapeutic solutions? Entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing of transitions of young people*, Kristiina Brunila, Katariina Mertanen and

Sari Mononen Batista-Costa critically analyse entrepreneurial and therapeutic education programmes in a range of Finnish institutional settings. The programmes are responses from local governments and the European Union to tackle young people's unemployment and aim at creating smoother transitions from school to working life. The authors explore the kind of subjectivities and entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses shaped as a form of governing young people. They argue that young people through these discourses learn to recognize themselves as responsible for their careers and self-actualization, looking inwards to find reasons for both success and failure in these respects.

In Chapter 8, *Ethical and care-oriented, but still psychological and 'at risk'— teachers' constructions of young people's transition from school to society*, Sara Irisdotter Aldenmyr and Maria Olson analyse Swedish teachers' descriptions of their teaching for health promotion. Three youth transition discourses stand out as prevailing: a psychological 'risk' discourse, a role model discourse, and an ethical discourse of care. The first two discourses yield hierarchical notions of youth transition from school to life, while the third stands out as more reciprocal and non-hierarchical. While the first discourse reflects a current therapeutic trend in society, the other two stand out as professional responses to this trend as they nurture notions of educational cultivation of youth based on traditional role modelling and ethical instruction.

The epilogue discusses some of the results from the previous chapters, in particular questions and insights that point to a need for new critical research on young people's careers and transition policies.

The majority of the contributions in this book concern young people and different aspects of the transition machinery in the Nordic countries of Iceland, Finland and Sweden but we also have a contribution from England to show similarities between policy landscapes. The aim of the book is not one of comparing transitions in different countries. However, the sample illuminates noteworthy similarities across the Nordic countries. They highlight for example a predominance of constructions of entrepreneurial, competitive and autonomous young individuals, held responsible for navigating their careers successfully while, paradoxically, at the same time they are often addressed as vulnerable and in need of psychological or therapeutic support. In parallel, activation policies, introduced in the late 1990s and early 2000s in many countries including the Nordic ones, require jobseekers to be available and actively showing the right attitudes to work as a precondition for receiving social support (also see Jørgensen, Järvinen & Lundahl, 2019). Hence, current transition policies in the Nordic countries seem to deviate from and be less harmonious than Walther's (2006) often-cited characterization of the Nordic universalistic transition regime as being inclusive, aiming at personal development, and supportive of young people experimenting with repeated switching between education and work. They set youth on the move, but under less benevolent conditions.

This book offers a fresh and critical analysis of youth transitions, based on young people's own narratives of risks and possibilities while moving ahead in life, and on studies of transition discourses, policies and practices. The book illustrates the dilemmas and dissonances, sometimes opportunities, which young people and young adults encounter when they face the contemporary 'transition machinery'.

Notes

[1] The title alludes to one of the 'flagship initiatives' of the Europe 2020 strategy.
[2] Young people aged 16–29 often find it difficult to decide if they are 'young' or 'adult'. Similarly, official statistics and reports use different definitions and delimitations. Here we alternate between the terms 'young adults', 'youth' and 'young people'.
[3] See Newman (2007) for a critical discussion of the different meanings of the concepts of activation and individualization in different welfare contexts.

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Young People's Trajectories and Agency

Young Citizenship

Academically High-Achieving Middle-Class Students in Transitions Talk about Participation

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One of the overall goals of Swedish youth policy is that young people shall participate in political and social life in their local and wider community, being part of the democratic dialogue and being able to influence in educational, social, and political contexts (Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2010). However, young people's participation in local and wider communities is being challenged by extended, fragmented and uncertain school-to-work transitions that characterize modern societies with high unemployment and unstable employment conditions (Woodman & Wyn, 2015). Uncertainty also characterizes the paths to higher education. Choosing the 'right' education is not an easy task, nor is qualifying for higher education—only a small and élite group is selected for the most popular programmes. Still, general expectations are high for effective transitions to and participation in further education and/or the labour market. Educational research has paid significant attention to certain groups of students who find it difficult to meet these ideals. This applies, for example, to

students from working-class backgrounds (e.g. Tolonen, 2008), minority ethnic groups and refugee students (e.g. Irisdotter Aldenmyr et al., 2012; Youdell, 2006), students with special educational needs (e.g. Slee, 2001), and 'at risk' youth (Brunila, 2012). Young people in these 'high-risk' groups (see Lundahl, 2011) are more likely than others to experience a lack of participation in society, a phenomenon that is also reflected in transition patterns into labour and higher markets. But what about the academically high-achieving middle-class students who, at least from an outsider perspective, seem to act and behave in accordance with these expectations? How do they, in their local school context, live participation, how do they reflect on transitions and imagine future participation, and, not least, to what extent do they identify with these ideals?

This chapter explores how academically high-achieving middle-class students in their last years of upper secondary school talk about lived and future participation. What ideas do they express about themselves as student-citizens, and how do these ideas relate to dominant discourses on participation in society? Participation constitutes acts of citizenship, and the analysis includes participation ranging from 'giving voice to one's opinions' to 'sharing decision-making and implementation of action' (Hart, 1997) in educational, social and political contexts. The concept of participation is also strongly linked to democracy—participation and influence are important components of what constitutes democracy. However, in this text participation will be discussed in the framework of citizenship rather than in relation to democracy.

By focusing on a group of students that previously has attracted little attention in this respect, the aim of this chapter is to contribute to the discussion about subjectification and the fostering of citizenship in educational contexts and to discuss the ways school and education prepare young people for educational and work transitions. By 'subjectification', I refer to the process of becoming an individual, i.e. becoming a 'self'– a process in which individuals are subjected and through which they actively subject themselves (Davies, 1993). 'Citizenship' is used in its broad meaning: to be an individual (a self) in a community—and that this belonging requires certain desirable competences and subjectivities. By analysing participation in the framework of subjectification and citizenship, it is possible to highlight what kind of subjectivity and citizenship 'counts' in 'youth transitions'. As many researchers in the field have pointed out, some citizen-subjects are preferable to others. The kind of citizenship that is desired also has relevance for transitions, and within the idea of a 'good' or 'ideal' citizen-subjectivity lies the notion of smooth and fast school-to-work transitions. What such transitions require in many countries is creative and enterprising learners who monitor their education in order to become well-educated and employable citizens as quickly and effectively as possible (Beach & Dovemark, 2011; Carlbaum, 2012; Lundahl & Olson, 2013; Olson, 2010, 2012).

The analysis presented here draws on interview data with 11 Swedish upper secondary school students (three boys, eight girls). I met them in an earlier study (e.g. see Rönnlund, 2010, 2011), when they were in lower secondary school. I conducted ethnographic work at their schools for nine months—doing interviews and observing everyday school life, including classroom activities, student council meetings and other school-related activities such as the forming of two action groups and the actions taken by the students engaged in these groups. During my stay, a group of students distinguished themselves by acting in particularly participatory and engaged ways in school.[1] For example, they often took initiatives in influencing the teaching process in the classroom by voicing their opinions to teachers, and they participated in various councils and student-organized action groups. Three years after the first study, I contacted them again and conducted in-depth interviews posing questions about their engagement and participation during their upper secondary years—about their lived participation in school and during leisure time, including their thoughts about participation in the future. The tape-recorded interviews were conducted outside the school in a public café and lasted one to one and a half hours. Due to my earlier contacts with the students, the interviews gave rich data about their ideas about themselves as student-citizens. I was able to follow their reflections on their current, past and future social, educational and political life and ask follow-up questions about acts of citizenship (see e.g. Tolonen, 2008; Lahelma, 2012, on longitudinal studies).

The students, all of them from Swedish middle-class backgrounds, were 18–20 years old at the time of the interviews. They studied various programmes in four different upper secondary schools, and eight of them were in their final year. The majority had continued to study the programme that they initially had chosen, but one had changed programmes and another had studied abroad for a year and taken up studies in a different programme after returning to Sweden.

By analysing how the students talked about 1) participation in their present life in school and in leisure time ('the present'), 2) participation in the future ('the future') and 3) themselves in relation to participation ('the self'), the study sheds light on students' understandings of 'ideal subjectivity' (perceptions of the ideal student-citizen subject) and understandings of 'self-subjectivity' (perceptions of their own subjectivity, i.e. their 'self'). The students' statements about participation are seen as acts in which the students present and construct/produce themselves by negotiating different self-images. In that sense, their talk provides pictures of individual ambitions and perceptions of the 'self' in relation to dominant discourses on participation in society. Following Foucault (1972), discourses are understood as organized bodies of knowledge, i.e. practices that form the objects of which they speak. This means that the students' statements about themselves and about being a student-citizen build on the discourses that are available to them—they talk

in ways that create meaning for them. The students become subjected within different discourses, but they are not simply the bearers of knowledge produced by discourses and they also exercise choice, or agency, in relation to discursive practices.

However, before going into particulars about how the students talked about participation, I will give some details about the Swedish and Nordic context and how participation and citizenship is communicated in national policy documents.

Student participation and citizenship in a Swedish and Nordic context

Historically, student participation has been a cornerstone of Nordic education.[2] This applies to a long tradition of coherent and unified comprehensive education—a 'school for all' where all children and youth have the right to participate—but also to democratic schooling in the sense that the school milieu shall provide students with possibilities to 'give voice' to their opinions and to influence and participate in decision-making (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006; Mikkelsen, 2004). This 'democratic' approach to participation and influence is a prominent part of Nordic citizenship education—the fostering of citizenship. By participating in everyday school life, like planning and evaluating the daily teaching and participating in committees and councils, the students are supposed to develop the ability to participate in decision-making and to exert influence. The basic assumption is that the students, with this competence, will grow into active citizens who participate in joint decision-making and take responsibility for their own life decisions and adult lives. The competences they acquire inside the classroom and the school are considered to be important citizen competences outside the school. A central premise in Nordic education has thus been that students learn democracy, participation and the 'right' kind of citizenship by practising or 'living' it.

During the 1980s and the 1990s, major policy changes took place in the Nordic countries as well as in other parts of Europe, signifying adjustments to neo-liberal and economic market-based ideas of education. In Sweden, school choice reforms led to increased marketization of the education system (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006; Lundahl, 2002, 2005; Lundahl & Olson, 2013; Olson, 2010, 2012). Due to this reform process, the understanding of participation has become loaded with additional values and participation has been extended even to taking active part in the education market. Students are supposed to navigate within the educational market and to monitor their education in relation to the goal of becoming a creative and enterprising subject, optimizing their chances of obtaining a good education and a good job or career (Beach & Dovemark, 2011; Carlbaum, 2012; Lundahl & Olson, 2013; Olson, 2010; Walkerdine & Ringrose, 2006). This also relates to understandings of citizenship.

Analyses of Swedish policy documents from the time of this restructuring process reveal how descriptions of a nation-building citizen have lost ground to the idea of a citizen with a more market-oriented role, but also to the idea of citizenship as related to personal identity. The role of national education is to provide children with competences to meet market-oriented demands and to educate them so that they become employable citizens (Lundahl, 2005; Olson, 2010, 2012; Carlbaum, 2012).

These policy discourses on citizenship and participation are intertwined with discourses that dominate late modernity. As put forward by Fielding, the emphasis on student participation can be understood as part of democratic schooling (in line with the Nordic tradition) but also as part of an essentially neo-liberal project and/or as part of a Foucauldian furtherance of governmentality (Fielding, 2004, p. 198). With regard to the second perspective, education is increasingly viewed as an instrument for fostering participative citizens who can handle, and take increasing individual responsibility in, modern society. The autonomous and self-made subject is expected to be active rather than acted upon, and thus the individual is made responsible for his or her choices. One basic idea here is that the individual is governed not primarily by central directives or local regulations but instead through more sophisticated practices of self-regulation (Foucault, 1991; see also Bauman, 2001; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1991). This late-modern framework of thoughts tends to nurture the vision of a citizen who is presumed to be active, competent and well educated and who can handle and take a growing individual responsibility in modern society. This also means that the individual is made responsible for his or her life choices, not least those in relation to educational and work transitions.

Analysis of the students' talk about participation

The interviews revealed close and interwoven relations between individual students' current participation, how they imagined future participation and their self-understandings. However, for the purpose of the analysis, I have made a separation that forms the basic logic for presentation of findings. I first give an account of the students' talk about participation in school and leisure time, followed by their talk about the future and about themselves. In the final section, I discuss these three aspects in relation to each other.

The present

The students seemed to participate in their everyday school life in about the same active ways they had during lower secondary school. They monitored their education, for example the content, organization and conduct of the teaching, and, if they were dissatisfied with something, they gave voice to their opinions and tried to change it. This was expressed in statements such as 'I express my

opinion when I don't agree with the teacher', 'If there is something that I find wrong, I go directly to the teacher' and 'If I meet the head teacher in the hallway and I have something I want to put forward, I say it'. Still another comment of this kind was: 'I try to have an influence whenever I can. If I find a teacher acting in an unacceptable way, I raise my voice and tell my opinion, and if I find other things unacceptable in school I do the same thing.'

As indicated by the quotations, the students expressed an overall individually oriented approach towards participation in school. They focused on their individual educational goals and emphasized the importance of monitoring their own education to make sure it was of good quality—they wanted to get as much as possible out of it. Patrik[3] was a student who expressly stated this. At the time for the interview, he studied at a private upper secondary school. He wanted to become a doctor but had doubts about whether his grades would be good enough for qualifying for the medical programme at the university. He participated on a regular basis in the student council but had a rather individual approach to his engagement there:

> Patrik: I mostly care about my own education and making sure it works in the best way, and if I can help out others with other things, yes, that happens sometimes, but that comes in second place.

This comment gives voice to a predominant 'selfish-individual' culture that other studies have also pointed out—a culture that nurtures the vision of a creative and enterprising student-subject who seeks to optimize his/her chances to obtain a good education and a good job or career. A general pattern in Sweden and elsewhere seems to be that political aspects of participation have increasingly been downplayed. Instead, there is a growing focus on individual performances (e.g. Beach & Dovemark, 2011; Lister et al., 2003). In this sense, the students' comments represented an understanding of participation that connects to late-modern subjectivity and the idea of students monitoring their education and becoming autonomous and self-made citizens.

However, the students' comments did not just represent an individually oriented agency and self-interest. There were also examples of collectively oriented participation and agency—a will and ambition to stand for and work for the student collective. For example, Susanne, a girl who during lower secondary school used to be vice president of the local student council, described herself as a lawyer, i.e. as someone who gives voice to one's classmates in discussions with the teachers: 'I am kind of like the class lawyer'. She explained: 'When the class needs to put forward something to the teacher, if we are unhappy with something and want to change something, they send me to discuss it with the teacher.' The collectively oriented agency where female students act on behalf of other students (see Öhrn, 1997, 2001) was mainly directed towards classmates, but in some cases it had a wider scope and included all students at the school. For example, when Isabelle, who used to be active in the student council at her

former school, found out that there was no functioning student council organization at her upper secondary school, she decided to rebuild it as she felt that all students had the right to have access to a local student council:

> Isabelle: I believe that every school should have a student council, so when I realized that our school, which is a really big one, did not have a functioning student council I simply had to do something about it. I just had to do something about it.

When talking about participation outside school, the students mentioned social and political activities, with an emphasis on social activities. Participation in sports clubs, music and theatre groups—including both long-term involvement and activities of a more temporary nature—were some of the social activities mentioned. In general, they described their leisure-time activities as self-actualizing projects. Through engagement in clubs, associations, interest groups etc. they developed their interests and participated in decision-making of various kinds. Several of them had become involved in larger projects, like Johan, who participated in a skateboard club:

> Johan: I participate in a skateboard club [he describes the club activities]. Through the club, I have been engaged in city committee work where we discuss the plans for building a new skateboard park in town.

When asked questions about political party engagement, the large majority of the students answered that they had no such interest. However, when discussing political participation in a wider perspective, they all considered themselves politically interested and they presented themselves as politically active through individualized and cause-oriented forms of participation (Ødegård & Berglund, 2008). Thus, they claimed interest in specific political issues rather than the overall programmes of political parties. Susanne mentioned being engaged in political activism on the Internet in the form of Facebook groups of various kinds. Below, she tells about her engagement in a Facebook group initiated to express disapproval towards the political party, the Sweden Democrats:[4]

> Susanne: Once I joined an 'anti-Sweden Democrats' Facebook group, but mom got worried when some Sweden Democrats started to harass and threaten me on the net. So I had to quit. I have tried since then not to get involved politically with people I do not know because they can hurt me, but sometimes I feel like going back there.

This kind of political engagement is in line with previous research. Several studies have reported on a partly changed attitude towards politics and political work among young people. It is not interest in politics and faith in democratic processes per se that has changed, but rather how they prefer

doing politics (e.g. Henn & Foard, 2014; Ødegård & Berglund, 2008), and this appears to refer to all groups of students regardless of academic or socio-economic background. In Sweden, for example, the proportion of young members of political parties has declined steadily and relatively sharply since the 1980s (Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2010).

The future

When the students were asked questions about how they imagined participation in the future, they claimed that giving voice to one's opinions and trying to exert influence would be important to them also in their future lives. This was expressed in statements such as 'I will probably continue arguing for … I mean, if it is something that I find wrong, it probably won't take long until I want to do something about it' and 'I guess I will continue like this, I have a lot of things I care about, a lot of ideas I want to put forward'. The main pattern was to express a general desire for continuing being 'participative'. In some cases, this desire was about specific domain. One example relates to an interview in which the student envisioned herself as being a parent one day and being engaged in her children's education:

> Interviewer: What about participation and engagement and trying to influence in the future then? Do you for example think you will be politically active in some way? In a political party? Doing activism of some kind?

> Mia: Somehow I think I will continue being interested in school issues. If I have children, I guess I will be the kind of mum that is engaged in my children's education and that tries to have influence in the school.

Another example relates to working life from an individually oriented perspective:

> Interviewer: What about participation and engagement and trying to influence in the future then? Do you think you will continue being this active and engaged?

> Anna: In situations where I can see that I can change things, yes, I don't think it will take me long to try to change things in these situations, like, for example, at a future work place, if I have complaints about my salary, well, for sure I will try to change that.

A participative and agentic approach was also expressed in relation to their future careers. They all strove to make 'something out of their lives', and planned

for becoming a doctor, an architect, a teacher, an actress, an author, a veterinarian, a meteorologist, an entrepreneur and a physicist.

Overall, their talk about the future mirrored a strong will and determination to live a self-actualizing life—to develop their personal interests and competences. Their participative and agentic approach thus mostly concerned individual and personal issues, and this mirrors what has been described as 'a culture of self-interest' (Ball, 2006, p. 82). However, the students also brought up social and political activities of a collective nature such as engagement in human rights and environmental/ecological issues (see also Strandbu & Skogen, 2000). This applied in particular to girls in the study. Here, individual mobility permeated their talk, such as taking a year off in order to do volunteer work in far-off places before taking up higher education (Hjort, 2014; Holland et al., 2007). A desire to 'help people' was a recurrent theme when they talked about taking a year off, but also when talking about future occupational plans: 'I want to work internationally with people, get to know and understand other cultures and people's everyday lives in other countries in order to meet people and help people.' Working with people in need of care in the public sector was mentioned (see Lahelma, 2012), as well as general statements about 'helping' people. This applied for example to Nellie, who during her lower secondary years was active in several school groups, and took the initiative to start a gender equality group at her school. With support from teachers and other students she organized a thematic day for all students at the school with a focus on gender issues (see Rönnlund, 2011). She was still engaged in gender issues, and participated in several groups and associations. When I asked her questions about the future, she expressed feelings of dedication to helping people and she was convinced that she would be participative and active also in the future:

> Nellie: I want to do something for other people, for women and youth. I find it interesting to teach them and fill them with enthusiasm in order to make them feel valuable somehow. Give them a valuable leisure-time activity or something. I think I will do something like that.

In short, Nellie wanted 'to make the world a better place to live'—a social and political ambition that included taking positions with respect to one's personal life and lifestyle. For example, her environmental interest and concern had made her realize that 'the political is personal' and that she needed to take a personal responsibility and change her own way of living. She planned to live a more natural lifestyle: 'I'm thinking of taking a course in how to become self-sufficient. I would like to live off the land, cultivating and things like that. I consider that to be a kind of political action.'

None of the students mentioned party politics. As has been discussed in the previous section, the younger generation has a weak commitment to traditional political participation (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Skolverket, 2010), and this was also reflected when the students talked about the future—they mentioned

'non-traditional' forms of political participation and a lack of interest in the parliamentary system: 'Politics? No, absolutely not. Well, if I become interested in a specific political issue, yes, maybe. But party politics in general, no.'

When relating the results of this analysis to analyses of policy documents on student participation and citizenship, we see a mixture of understandings of participation (see also Fielding, 2004). We recognize participation as an individual and personal project including future educational and occupational success plans in line with neo-liberal and late-modern societal ideals (i.e. a 'selfish culture' celebrating individual responsibility, autonomy, self-regulation etc.). In this school of thought, the student is supposed to be an individually responsible, creative and enterprising subject who takes initiative to change things in order to optimize their chances of obtaining a good education and a good job or career (see Walkerdine & Ringrose, 2006; Beach & Dovemark, 2011). However, we can also see that participation is understood in a broader framework: as social and political activities, such as volunteering in other parts of the world, engaging in human rights and environmental or ecological issues, and working with people in need of care (i.e. a 'democratic' culture celebrating social justice, collective thinking, a care for fellow beings etc.).

The self

In general, the students presented themselves as active and agentic—as individuals who take part in various social and political activities, and as people who give voice to and argue for their opinion and take initiatives to change things: someone who makes a difference. This was expressed through general statements such as 'I want to change, improve, and bring things on'. This was also expressed in the many 'agentic' plans, like plans for higher education and plans for doing volunteer work. It was also expressed in comments such as: 'If you want change, you need to be pushy in order to make a change. You yourself need to make those changes real.' They seemed to understand participation as a mainly communicative process, and themselves as communicatively competent. One student said, for example, 'When discussing and arguing with the teacher in the classroom, I tend to be direct and clear.'

Altogether, being active, agentic, and communicatively competent were central themes when the students talked about their lived and future participation—and thus these were the central themes in how self-subjectivity was put forward. Overall, their self-presentations indicated that they experienced themselves as active agents in the construction of their lives, who have the resources to negotiate transitions and to achieve their life goals. Their plans for the future reflected open-minded ideas about what to do in the future and visions of limitless options (Holland et al., 2007).

One interpretation of this is that their everyday school life, family life, leisure-time activities etc., provided them with an agentic approach and

confidence to participate. As been demonstrated in previous research, students do enact agency in school and try to exert influence (Hjelmer, 2012; Rosvall, 2011; Öhrn, 1997), and from these processes they learn participative competence (Rönnlund, 2011, 2013, 2014). Their local participation—in school, in their family, in the community etc.—seemed to provide them with a generally positive attitude towards their future lives and towards individual mobility (see also Holland et al., 2007). Their experiences of local participation also seemed to make them think about themselves as participative in the future. In particular, participation in school groups and interest groups seemed to make them develop the skills necessary for political participation (Quintelier, 2008).

Another interpretation—which does not necessarily exclude the previous one—is that the students had taken up the way of talking (and thinking) about how to act and behave as active student-citizens that dominates modern society (e.g. Bjerrum Nielsen, 2009; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1991). Being active, agentic and communicatively competent are key components of ideal subjectivity in the framework of neo-liberalism and late modernity as well as in the framework of democracy and democratic citizenship. This interpretation points to the 'constitutive force of the discourses' that leads the students to subject themselves within the dominant societal discourse (Brunila & Siivonen, 2014, p. 4). Following this idea, individuals become subjected within different discourses. However, they also exercise choice, or agency, in relation to discursive practices. In this way, they participate in producing knowledge about what it is to be an active and participative student-citizen and, by extension, how one thinks about oneself and one's future life, what goals one sets for oneself, and what choices one makes.

There was thus an intertwining of self-subjectivity and ideal subjectivity in the interviews. However, when analytically trying to separate the two, marginalized discourses also emerged, for example in relation to education and career plans. Most of the talk about becoming a successful student and having a good career was presented as non-problematic. Nevertheless, there were also comments reflecting uncertainty, anxiety and doubts about transitions in their future lives (see Borlagdan, 2014). This included anxiety about making the 'right' choices and if their marks would be good enough to qualify them for their desired programme in higher education, but also a general uncertainty about what to do in the future. This applied for example to Johan, who during lower secondary school had participated actively in the student council but felt socially excluded in his school class. He had experienced the transition from lower secondary to upper secondary school as a release as it meant a new school environment and new classmates, but after a term he realized that the programme was not what he expected so he quit and changed to another programme. He was satisfied with the new programme but dissatisfied with some of the teachers' teaching methods. From the first day, he tried to give voice to his critique, but did not experience great changes, and consequently he had lost interest in school and started to skip lessons. At the time of the interview, upper

secondary school was coming to an end, and he worried about his grades and felt uncertain about the future, saying that he did not know what to do in the coming years or what career would suit him.

> Johan: I will have to study up some subjects, that's for sure, but also, I have no idea what to do next, it's like three years ago when I was about to quit grade 9 and decide on a program in upper secondary, I did not know what to choose.

Another sub-discourse was self-criticism. In general, the students presented themselves as active and participative and gave the impression of being confident. In parallel, some of them described themselves as not being sufficiently active or participative. This was especially characteristic of comments where the students compared their present participation in school with former participation, saying that they had been more active in collective actions and in councils of various kinds in the past and that their participation had decreased. Their talk on this issue mirrored an understanding of individual and collective participation as a student-citizen requirement, and they related to what they communicated as 'not being active enough', to 'lack of energy' or 'lack of time', saying that they wanted to prioritize and concentrate on their schoolwork. This applied for example to Sebastian:

> Sebastian: I did not want to put extra time into something that would take time away from my studies. I did not join the student council. I enjoy that kind of work, but it takes time, and I did not want to put extra time into that.

In a similar spirit, Andrea talked about her non-engagement in the school council at her school:

> Andrea: I don't know why I did not raise my hand when we were asked for volunteers to represent the class in the student council. I guess I hesitated because of the heavy workload we had at the time. I did not want to miss any lessons.

As we can see in the students' comments, not participating in the school council was a result of rational consideration and an active choice. However, when they talked about not participating, it was instead presented as an individual shortcoming. This part of the analysis indicates that the students had a relatively clear idea of what was expected from them as participants in school and society, but also that they had strategic (individual) choices to consider—in this example, participating in student council or in classroom activities. As shown by Beach and Dovemark (2011, p. 207), middle-class students in particular seem to 'act in ways that they believe will maximize returns from invested time and effort, or at least does not endanger good grades'. However, from these

interviews it seems that how one can make the 'right' choices and maximize returns is not always obvious.

Furthermore, some students expressed self-criticism and concern when talking about everyday classroom practices. On the one hand, they felt expectations to participate in discussions and to give voice to their opinions in the classroom. On the other, they felt expected not to take up too much space—not talking too much or too loudly. This applied for example to Andrea. At lower secondary school she had got comments from teachers and other students which she interpreted as her being 'too loud' and taking up too much space. As a consequence, she tried to take a more passive role in the classroom:

> Interviewer: Do you participate in discussions in the classroom, arguing for your opinions?
>
> Andrea: Maybe too much sometimes.
>
> Interviewer: Has anyone told you that?
>
> Andrea: No, but it would sometimes be better to let others talk.

Andrea's self-criticism captures the existence of complex communicative norms in the classroom, and the challenges to meet these in order to become an ideal student-subject. These and other comments about not being active enough and talking too much and taking up too much space indicate that, even though the students on a general discursive level positioned themselves within the dominant discourse, they struggled to fit into the notion of the ideal student-citizen—to act 'the right kind' of participation. This part of the analysis also points to the discursive power that lies within educational practices and how this power shapes young adults' subjectivities—how they were emphasizing certain aspects of subjectivity and withholding other aspects. This is representative of how, according to Brunila (2012, p. 484), 'discursive constructions take hold of the self'. It also points to the multifaceted nature of ideal subjectivity and citizenship. From the interviews, it seems as if the students had to position themselves against a complex ideal. They needed to be agentic and communicative in terms of 'giving voice' to oneself and others *and* be an academically high-achieving student who attended all lessons, focused on their studies and adapted to communicative norms by not talking too much or too loudly. As previous Nordic research has pointed out, this is a challenge to live up to in practice (Arnesen et al., 2010), both in their present student-citizen lives and in their future lives.

Concluding remarks

The analysis has shown how discourses of ideal subjectivity and self-subjectivity mainly harmonized, empowered and normalized each other. On a

general discursive level, the students positioned themselves within the dominant institutional and societal discourse on what it means to be an active and participative student-citizen when expressing self-subjectivity. They presented themselves, and seemed to view themselves, in ways that harmonized with late-modern and neo-liberal subjectivity. For example, when they talked about the future they expressed an ambition to realize and fulfil themselves educationally, socially and politically—to become a well-educated, autonomous, responsible, agentic, enterprising and mobile self-made citizen. Included in some of the students' notions of what it means to be a citizen was also commitment to democratic values and to collective social and political activities such as volunteering and engaging in human rights and environmental/ecological issues. Thus, they identified—at least on a general level—with subjectivity and citizenship within the framework of late-modern, neo-liberal and democratic thinking.

The analysis suggests that these academically high-achieving middle-class students differ from students who are categorized as 'culturally different', 'disadvantaged' or 'at risk'. The latter often feel they need to suppress their own subjectivities in order to meet with these ideals and position themselves as subjects outside of ideal active and participative student-subjectivities (e.g. Beach & Dovemark, 2011; Brunila, 2012; Irisdotter Aldenmyr et al., 2012; Tolonen, 2008). As these and other researchers have suggested, schooling is a middle-class project, which means that young people from advantaged backgrounds with access to strong social, economic and cultural resources have fewer problems adjusting to these ideals and fitting into the expected student-citizen role than, for example, young people from working-class backgrounds. They are also better able to manage the anxiety and risks arising from uncertain life choices and transitions.

As has been demonstrated throughout the chapter, the ideals that young people are facing are composite and complex. Even though the students at a general discursive level subjected themselves within the dominant discourses on ideal subjectivity and citizenship (being participative, autonomous, enterprising etc.) and talked about transitions with confidence, they also gave expression to worries and uncertainty about the future. At this point, the analysis indicates a strongly reflexive attitude towards transitions and that even this 'low-risk' group of students struggles to respond to the complexity of being a 'good' and successful student-citizen. Striving to be an active and participative student-citizen who navigates within the educational market in order to realize and fulfil oneself and to become a successful citizen in social, democratic and labour market aspects thus seems to be a significant challenge even for this group of students.

So what does this analysis tell us in a wider perspective? What are the implications with regard to the students' future educational, social, political and working lives? Drawing on the analysis presented here, I argue that the complexity that lies in being a 'good' and successful student and citizen is challenging

to young people. In this Nordic context, we found a mixture of neo-liberal, late-modern and 'democratic' ideals to live up to. Furthermore, participation in everyday life during adolescence and the experiences linked to it such as self-confidence but also anxiety and doubts about one's participative competence are likely to affect how one thinks about and deals with transitions in one's future life. In particular, I want to highlight the comments that included self-criticism (e.g. not being participative enough) because they tend to indicate underlying structural patterns related to gender. It is relevant to discuss how young people envision their future paths and transitions from a gender perspective because female paths to adulthood are often bordered with ambivalence (Lahelma, 2012). In this context, important research on gendered subjectification and citizenship processes should also be mentioned (e.g. Arnot, 2009; Walkerdine, 2003). As argued by Walkerdine and Ringrose (2006), the 'feminine' and the 'masculine' are defined in new ways in the 'neoliberal subject formation'. While some of the qualities that lie in the neo-liberal subject, such as being autonomous and assertive, are traditionally associated with male subjectivity and others are associated with female qualities, subjectification in neo-liberal contexts involves 'new' ideals in relation to gender (Walkerdine & Ringrose, 2006). In the study presented here, statements about engagement in environmental/ecological issues and helping people in need of care were gendered in the sense that they referred to interviews with girls. It is not possible to draw conclusions from the present small-scale study in which only a few students were addressed. However, the broad ambitions of participation that these girls expressed—strong ambitions to choose demanding high-quality professions, to become an engaged 'mum' *and* ambitions like volunteering and engaging in political and social issues that go beyond occupational and family-related ambitions—are likely to put extra pressure on these individuals in their everyday lives and in their future lives.

   Furthermore, there was a tendency among the students to understand participation in school and society and successes and adversities in relation to participation as something essentially personal and psychological (Walkerdine, 2003). The extended, fragmented and uncertain educational and work transitions that young people are facing today are part of societal, economic and cultural structures. Understanding participation as something personal and psychological obscures this fact. To understand one's position in a personal framework obscures the economic and political processes that frame our lives and turn structural patterns into matters of self-esteem and individual agency (see also Lundahl, 2011). When not being participative enough in school and society is regarded as solely a personal 'shortcoming' and 'failure', there is a risk that young people's future educational, social and working lives—even in this group of students with advantaged backgrounds, open-minded ideas about the future and visions of limitless options—will contain trajectories that they consider as personal failures. It is therefore important that young people are provided with tools to see and reflect on their own participatory practices and transitions in a wider societal context.

Notes

[1] In the ethnographic study, 20 students were identified as being especially 'participative' and 'engaged', and all 20 were contacted for follow-up interviews. Eleven students accepted. The gender balance within the group of 11 students—three boys and eight girls—roughly reflected the balance that characterized the group of 20 as well as the gender pattern in participation in the studied secondary schools.

[2] 'Nordic' refers to Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Iceland is not discussed here.

[3] The students have fictional names. These do not correspond to the names used when reporting results from the study when they were in lower secondary school.

[4] The Swedish Democrats or the Sweden Democrats (in Swedish, Sverigedemokraterna, SD) is a far-right political party that has had parliamentary representation since the 2010 general election.

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Social Background and Labour Market Careers of Young People

A Comparison of Two Cohorts of Finnish Young People not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

Tero Järvinen

In the course of recent decades, education has become an extremely strong predictor of one's occupational attainment and labour market career, and the linkage between educational attainment and occupational placement has become crucial in the social stratification process in post-industrial societies (Kerckhoff, 2000). The increased educational level of the population has led to educational inflation in many countries, which has further strengthened the connection between educational qualifications and occupational positions (Gangl, 2003; Aro, 2014). While the significance of educational qualifications in shaping one's labour market career has increased, the societal situation of those with a minimum level of education has weakened the most. Research in different countries suggests that early school leavers, those who leave school at

16, are more likely to become unemployed, stay unemployed for longer time, have jobs with less employment security and more part-time work, have lower earnings and accumulate less wealth over their life course. They are also less likely to return to education and training later in life. Further, they also more often experience poor physical and mental health, have higher rates of crime and less often engage in active citizenship. In addition, they are more likely than other citizens to draw on welfare and other social programmes throughout their lives (Dale, 2009; Lamb, 2011).

As the role of education in structuring and shaping the life courses of individuals is becoming more and more significant, from the point of view of social equality and justice it is important to ask whether the risks and consequences of dropout and educational exclusion are equal for all social groups. Even though life courses might have been individualized in many respects (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001; Côté, 2002), there is evidence that people's locations within power structures still strongly affect their life chances and thus the formation of their life courses (Iannelli & Smyth, 2008; Furlong, 2009). The impact of one's social background on educational aspirations and attainment has proved to be one of the most consistent findings in the sociology of education (Reay, 2010; Weis, 2010). Research has regularly shown how advantages and disadvantages associated with social background are associated with the educational and labour market outcomes of the individuals including dropout (Vanttaja & Järvinen, 2006) and completion of upper secondary education (Kallio, Kauppinen & Erola, 2016).

One must note, however, that social background does not have a determining effect on the life-course transitions and trajectories of individuals. Life courses consist of life phases and transitions that are always constructed in a reciprocal process of political, social and economic conditions, welfare state regulations and provisions and biographical decisions and investments related to changing living circumstances. Historical conditions (e.g. economic cycles, wars) and institutional arrangements (e.g. education systems, labour markets and welfare provisions) influence the shaping of individual biographies. Hence, life-course transitions and trajectories are constructed differently in different socio-historical, structural, cultural and institutional settings (Heinz et al., 2009).

Long-term studies, such as those by Breen, Luijkx, Müller and Pollak (2009, 2010) have shown that class-based inequalities in educational attainment have declined over the 20th century in many European countries. Improved living conditions and standards of living have made working-class children less disadvantaged in terms of health and nutrition and have increased the probability of their children being able to continue to higher levels of education. The prolongation of compulsory schooling and reduced tracking of students that have taken place in many countries have delayed the critical points of educational division and selection. Furthermore, the transformation from an agricultural and industrial society to a service and information society has led to an increase in the number of jobs where education is essential. This, in turn, may

have resulted in a narrowing between classes in the importance they attach to education in gaining employment chances (Breen et al., 2010).

Looking at the relation between social origin, education and destinations in the UK during the years 1991–2005, Devine and Li (2013) argue that the reduction of social class effects upon educational attainment and occupational destinations has been rather weak. Instead of narrowing the gap between the top and the bottom, the changes mainly concerned the middle ranges of the class hierarchy. Finnish long-term studies on the relationship between social background and educational attainment have mainly concentrated on the class-based differences in participation in university education. Due to the use of different data and methods, the results are mixed. Kivinen, Hedman and Kaipainen (2012) argue that the differences in the relative chances, as measured by odds ratios between university students from academic and non-academic families, have decreased between the years 1970–2010. However, Karhunen and Uusitalo (2017), who base their analyses on rank correlations, show that the impact of social background on individuals' participation in university education has remained relatively stable or even strengthened in the course of the past 50 years. Compared to the strong interest taken in access and selection to university education, there is a scarcity of long-term studies on the changing relation between social background and exclusion from education.

Educational inequalities and exclusion are constructed differently in different systems. Based on Allmendinger's (1989) typology of education systems, in which countries are clustered on the basis of the levels of stratification and standardization of their education systems, Finland belongs to a group of countries with high-level comprehensive school systems. In the Finnish education system, the degree of differentiation within educational levels (i.e. tracking) is low and there are no dead-end tracks (Rinne & Järvinen, 2011). According to previous studies, high-level comprehensive systems promote educational equality. The earlier students are divided into different tracks based on their abilities or achievement, the more substantial are the effects of family background on their performance level and the formation of their educational careers (Marks, 2005; Horn, 2009).

The first critical transition and selection point in the Finnish education system is the transition from compulsory to further education. At that point, young people must decide whether to continue with academic or vocational studies for upper secondary education. Annually, approximately 50% of compulsory school leavers continue their studies in general upper secondary education, whereas approximately 40% move on into vocational education and training (VET) programmes. Less than 10% of each age cohort leaves school immediately after completing compulsory education. During the past few years the dropout trend has been decreasing, however. In 2010, 9% of compulsory school leavers did not continue in upper secondary education immediately after completing comprehensive school. In 2016, the equivalent share was only 3% (Statistics Finland).

Across Europe, young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) are defined as one of the main target groups of education, employment and youth policies. Increased completion of upper secondary education is being given high priority in the EU and OECD, and reducing the number of NEETs is one of the key benchmarks of the EU youth strategy. Further, governments across Europe have established policies to support young people's school-to-work transitions and thus to reduce the social exclusion of young people (Eurofound, 2012, 2014). In Finland, these transition policy priorities have been increasingly emphasized since the 1990s, particularly after Finland joined the EU in 1995 (Järvinen & Jahnukainen, 2001; Sandberg, 2015).

According to Pohl and Walther (2007), the key dimensions along which transition policies differ from each other is whether their approach to disadvantage and exclusion is individualizing or structural. With regard to the individualizing approach, disadvantage is seen as an individual deficit, whereas in structural approaches the significance of young people's socio-economic background on their career formation is recognized and disadvantage is connected to the lack of societal opportunities, such as lack of jobs. As in many other European countries, the policy changes that have taken place in recent years have changed the approach from structural to a more individualizing one, even in the Nordic countries famous for their universal welfare policies. The studies on transition policies in Nordic countries have revealed that young people themselves are increasingly expected to take extensive responsibility for their own careers and to be self-governing, enterprising and proactive (e.g. Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014).

Research questions and methods

In this chapter, the relationship between social background and the labour market careers of young people, as well as possible changes in this respect, are explored by following up the later labour market careers of two cohorts of Finnish young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The comparison is targeted at those who were outside of employment and education immediately after completing compulsory school in 1985 and those who were in a similar situation 10 years later, in 1995. For that purpose, longitudinal data on the later labour market careers of Finnish young people aged 16–18 (excluding those in military service) who were not employed and had not continued their schooling after compulsory school in 1985 (n=6983) and 1995 (n=7508) are utilized. The research data consist of census register data on NEETs, compiled by Statistics Finland. The sample of the study is cross-sectional, including 50% of all Finnish youths (aged 16–18) without upper secondary education who were unemployed or outside working life for some other reason in the last weeks of 1985 (first cohort) and 1995 (second cohort). Their labour market careers were followed up at five-year intervals up to and including the years 2000 (first cohort) and 2007 (second cohort).

There is a theoretical possibility that some study participants may have been 'accidentally' unemployed at that time, but considering the size of the target group this is not a significant problem. In addition, those who had dropped out of upper secondary education during the first semester are included in the data. These youths would possibly have been outside the study if the sample had been based on, for example, an annual average of their main activity. Further, one of the advantages of research based on census data is the very small loss of data compared to longitudinal interview and survey studies. The loss of data, particularly in survey studies, tends to be clearly noticeable in the case of certain 'risk groups', such as unemployed young people.

The research questions are as follows:

- What consequences does exclusion from education and work (at the age of 16–18) have on the later labour market careers of young people coming from different social backgrounds?
- Has the relationship between social background and the later labour market careers of NEETs been different for young people belonging to different cohorts (NEET cohorts of the mid-1980s and mid-1990s)?

The comparison of the NEET cohorts makes it possible to explore the relationship between one's socio-economic background and the consequences of dropout in different socio-historical contexts in Finland, before and after the recession of the early 1990s. This recession caused a rapid change in the basic structure of the Finnish society. Although the international economy slowed down at the same time, the recession was deeper in Finland than elsewhere in Europe. Even though the economy started to recover after 1994, the positive development did not succeed in producing wealth in the same manner for everyone. This, together with the neo-liberal policy changes of the 1990s, promoted increasing inequalities between socio-economic groups (Järvinen & Vanttaja, 2001; Berisha et al., 2017). According to the results of the large research project on the changes of the Finnish society between the years 1988 and 1994 (Blom, 1999), the economic recession of the early 1990s had profound consequences for the Finnish labour market and class structure. Unemployment and long-term unemployment rates increased and so did temporary and part-time employment contracts. Because of these changes, and inflation of the number of education degrees (e.g. Aro, 2014), risks and uncertainties in school-to-work transitions increased and unstable labour market careers became more common. Further, while people from all social groups were affected by economic crises, those already in disadvantaged positions suffered the most in terms of employment prospects and the risk of disengagement. The polarization between different social groups became steeper and social mobility decreased dramatically.

Consequently, the two cohorts of the present study have been outside of education and working life under different socio-historical conditions. The follow-up of the NEET cohort of the mid-1980s begins in 1990, when both general

and youth unemployment rates were still lower in Finland than in the EU and OECD countries on average. However, as a result of the economic recession at the beginning of the decade, the employment situation of young people deteriorated rapidly. In 1994, the youth unemployment rate was 34% in Finland, paralleled in Europe only by Spain. From 1995, the general unemployment rate started to decrease, but the employment situation of young people was still weak. At the last follow-up point, in 2000, the economic situation had already improved, but the youth unemployment rate was still more than twice as high (20%) as it had been in 1990 (Statistics Finland).

When the NEETs of the mid-1990s completed their compulsory education, the employment situation was clearly worse than it had been 10 years earlier, when the cohort of 1985 was at a corresponding stage. In 1995, the youth unemployment rate was as high as 30% and at the first follow-up it was still at a high level, 20%. As for the 1995 cohort, the youth unemployment rate remained high throughout the follow-up period, being 17% in the final follow-up in 2007 (Statistics Finland). In addition, the association between educational degrees and occupational positions strengthened in Finland between the years 1990 and 2007 (Rinne & Järvinen, 2011). Hence, there were fewer opportunities for young people without an upper secondary education qualification to get a foothold in the labour market at the time when the NEET cohort of 1995 left education.

Not only socio-economic but also political conditions influencing school-to-work transitions have been different for these two cohorts. After the recession of the early 1990s, reducing dropout and supporting school-to-work transitions of those defined as 'youths at risk' have been higher on the political agenda and more effort has been put into preventing non-completion of upper secondary education and reintegrating dropouts and early school leavers in comparison with the previous decade (e.g. Järvinen & Jahnukainen, 2001). Hence, the NEET cohort of the mid-1980s dropped out of education when the labour markets were still relatively open even for early school leavers, but the resources targeted at reintegrating early school leavers and NEETs were scarcer in comparison with the situation 10 years later, when the second cohort in this study dropped out of the education system. The educational exclusion of the NEET cohort of the mid-1990s, in turn, occurred in a societal situation where the labour markets were practically closed to early school leavers (Blom, 1999) but reducing dropout and supporting the completion of upper secondary education were placed higher on the political agenda.

The age group of NEETs in this study is different from that by Eurostat, which covers the age group of 15- to 24-year-olds (Eurofound, 2012). In this study, choosing NEETs aged 16–18 as a target group was based on the following facts. First, according to several studies, transition from lower to upper secondary education is a critical stage from the point of view of the educational and social exclusion of young people (e.g. Lamb et al., 2011). Second, difficulties in the early stages in one's labour market career have been found to lead to an increased risk of subsequent unemployment or insecure employment

(Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Korpi et al., 2003). Third, in Finland two main problems related to educational exclusion of young people are young people's dropping out of the educational system immediately after lower secondary school and interruption of vocational secondary schooling (Rinne & Järvinen, 2011). Choosing NEETs aged 16–18 as a target group hence ensured that those Finnish young people who were seen to be at the greatest risk of educational and social exclusion were included in the data. Finally, since the objective of the present study was to follow up the labour market transitions and careers of NEETs from the early stages of their career, the use of an extended age category, such as 15–24 years, would have been an inappropriate decision also from this point of view.

One must note, however, that young people outside education and working life constitute a heterogeneous category that includes both those who are available for work and actively seeking employment as well as those who are not available or seeking work such as those with responsibilities for the care of children (Eurofound, 2012). However, although these different sub-groups may have different experiences, characteristics and needs (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007), they share a common feature of being unskilled, as a result of which they can be expected to have great difficulties in finding their place in the labour market.

To answer the research questions, the labour market careers of NEETs are analysed by combining information gathered from three observation years (cohort 1985: 1990, 1995, 2000; cohort 1995: 2000, 2005 and 2007). The effect of social background, as measured by parents' educational level,[1] on the later labour market careers of NEETs is analysed by using both cross-tabulations and odds ratios based on a logistic regression model. The rationale for choosing parental education as an indicator of social background comes from the result of a previous study on the later life courses of the Finnish NEETs. Here the educational level of parents was the variable with the greatest explanatory value on the positive educational and labour market outcomes of the target group (Järvinen, Vanttaja & Aro, 2007; see also Paananen, Ristikari, Merikukka, Rämö & Gissler, 2012).

The following results section begins with a general overview of the later labour market careers of NEETs, after which the impact of social background on the formation of the careers is analysed in more detail.

Results

Labour market careers

First, to get an overview of the labour market careers of NEETs belonging to different cohorts, eight employment careers were constructed based on their main activity in three observation years (Table 2.1). Two categories of labour market status were taken into account in each observation year: 1) employed/studying and 2) unemployed/outside the active labour force. In Table 2.1, the first two

career types ('Stable', 'Stabilized') represent a successful transition to the labour market, whereas the last two types represent careers with labour market exclusion ('Stagnant I', 'Stagnant II'). The rest of the career types represent different kinds of unstable labour market careers: 'Interrupted', 'Unstable', 'Stuck', 'Recovered'.[2]

As one can see from Table 2.1, one third of the NEETs of the mid-1980s and a half of the NEETs of the mid-1990s had experienced a successful transition to the educational and labour markets. Further, 28% of those belonging to the stable group and 38% of those belonging to the stagnant group had been either employed or a student in each of the three observation years. In addition, the NEETs of the mid-1980s had had greater difficulties in finding their place in working life: 29% of them had been either unemployed or outside the active labour force in each of the three observation years. The corresponding share among the cohort of 1995 was 21%. Hence, despite the more difficult socio-economic situation and the decreased labour market opportunities for those with low educational qualifications, the NEETs of the mid-1990s had succeeded better in finding their place in working life compared to their counterparts of the mid-1980s.

Table 2.1: The labour market careers of NEETs belonging to different cohorts (%).

Labour market career	1st observation year	2nd observation year	3rd observation year	Cohort 1985 (n=6983)	Cohort 1995 (n=7508)
Stable	Employed /studying	employed/ studying	employed/ studying	28	38
Stabilized	unemployed/ outside the labour force	employed/ studying	employed/ studying	5	13
Interrupted	employed/ studying	employed/ studying	unemployed/ outside the labour force	6	5
Unstable	employed/ studying	unemployed/ outside the labour force	employed/ studying	11	6
Stuck	unemployed/ outside the labour force	employed/ studying	unemployed/ outside the labour force	3	4
Recovered	unemployed/ outside the labour force	unemployed/ outside the labour force	employed/ studying	7	6
Stagnant (I)	employed/ studying	unemployed/ outside the labour force	unemployed/ outside the labour force	11	8
Stagnant (II)	unemployed/ outside the labour force	unemployed/ outside the labour force	unemployed/ outside the labour force	29	21

The significance of social background

In Table 2.2, the connection between one's social background, as measured by parent's educational level, and ending up in different kinds of employment careers is examined. For that purpose, the eight career types presented in Table 2.1 are merged into three as follows: 'stable' career ('Stable'), 'unstable' career ('Stabilized', 'Interrupted', 'Unstable', 'Stuck', 'Recovered') and 'stagnant' career ('Stagnant I', 'Stagnant II').

When looking at the most different careers, 'stable' and 'stagnant', the connection between social background and the labour market careers of NEETs becomes clear. The relationship is, however, different in the cohorts of 1985 and 1995. With regard to the stable group, the connection between socio-economic background and labour market outcomes was linear: the more educated were the parents, the more often their offspring gained 'stable' labour market careers and the more unlikely it was for their children to end up in 'stagnant' careers. Moreover, most of the NEETs whose parents had a higher education degree had ended up in 'stable' careers as adults and the smallest number of them in 'stagnant' careers. In the case of the NEETs whose parents had only a basic education, the results were the opposite: most of them had ended up in 'stagnant' careers and the smallest group of them in 'stable' career (Table 2.2).

In the case of the 1995 cohort, the relationship between socio-economic background and labour market careers was not as straightforward as it had been in the case of earlier cohort. Among all three groups, the largest number of the young people had ended up in the 'stable' career and the smallest number in the 'stagnant' career. However, although the differences between groups were small, young people with highly educated parents were most likely to end up in the 'stable' career group, while young people coming from low educational backgrounds had the highest proportions of those who ended up in 'stagnant' careers.

Table 2.2: The labour market careers of NEETs by parents' educational level (%).

Career type	Parents' educational level					
	Cohort 1985 (n=6,983)			Cohort 1995 (n=7,508)		
	Basic education	Upper secondary	Higher education *	Basic Education	Upper secondary	Higher education
Stable	25	32	41	38	39	45
Unstable	32	34	33	33	34	28
Stagnant	43	34	27	30	26	26
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100

*The category of 'higher education' includes bachelor's and master's degrees, as well as second stage of tertiary education (ISCED 1997 levels 5A and 6).

In Table 2.3, the *relative chances* of NEETs from different educational back-grounds gaining 'stable' labour market careers are calculated using odds ratios. The calculations are based on a logistic regression model, which estimates the influence of independent factors on the dichotomous variable (gaining 'stable' labour market career vs. not gaining 'stable' labour market career) (see e.g. Kivinen & Rinne, 1995; Marshall & Swift, 1999). In the table, the odds ratios describe the chances of the offspring of parents with upper secondary educa-tion, bachelor's degrees and master's degrees relative to the chances for the off-spring of parents with basic education. The probability for those whose parents had a basic education standardized at 1.0. In Table 2.3, calculations have been made concerning both the NEETs of the mid-1980s and mid-1990s. This makes it possible to estimate whether the relative chances of NEETs from different educational backgrounds gaining a stable employment career have changed over the course of time.

However, while odds ratios can be considered valid indicators of the statisti-cal chances of individuals from different categories being and not being mem-bers of other categories, they are not intended to measure any other kind of inequality (Marshall & Swift, 1999; see Marks, 2004). Bearing that in mind, and by comparing odds ratios at different points of time, we can see that the relative chances of young people belonging to the NEET group gaining a successful labour market career are higher for those whose parents have completed either upper secondary or higher education than those whose parents have only basic education. However, although this held true both in 1985 and 1995, the dif-ferences in the relative chances of young people from different social origins gaining 'stable' labour market career have diminished over time. In 1985, the probability of NEETs whose parents had master's degrees gaining 'stable' careers was 2.18 compared to those whose parents had only basic education, while the corresponding figure was only 1.56 in 1995. The trend in regard to other educational levels is similar (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Odds ratios of NEETs gaining 'stable' labour market career by parents' level of education (cohorts of 1985 and 1995 compared; parent with basic education=1.00).

Parent's educational level	Odds ratio of gaining a 'stable' labour market career	
	cohort of 1985	cohort of 1995
Upper secondary	1.38	1.07
Higher education/bachelor's degree	2.18	1.48
Higher education/master's degree[*]	2.18	1.56

*ISCED 1997/level 6 included (Second stage of tertiary education).

Table 2.4: Odds ratios of NEETs ending up in 'Stagnant II' labour market career by parents' level of education (cohorts of 1985 and 1995 compared, parent with higher education/master's degree=1.00).

Parent's educational level	Odds ratio of ending up into 'Stagnant II' labour market career	
	cohort of 1985	cohort of 1995
Basic education	2.42	1.22
Upper secondary	1.58	0.96
Higher education/bachelor's degree	1.52	1.17

In Table 2.4, the connection between parent's educational level and the labour market careers of their offspring is analysed from the opposite point of view, paying attention to those NEETs who had dropped out of education and working life altogether ('Stagnant II'). One can see that the protective role of parental education has decreased over time. In the mid-1980s, the odds ratio of NEETs ending up in 'Stagnant II' labour market careers among those whose parents had basic education compared with those whose parents had a master's degree was 2.42, while the corresponding figure was only 1.22 10 years later (Table 2.4). Hence, the significance of social background in determining the labour market integration of the NEETs in terms of both labour market inclusion and exclusion had decreased in the course of 10 years.

Discussion

In this study, the consequences of dropping out of the Finnish education system before and after the economic recession of the early nineties were analysed. Particular attention was paid to the relationship between social background and the later labour market careers of NEETs, and whether this relationship had changed over time. The socio-economic circumstances, particularly in terms of labour market opportunities available for young people, were different for the two cohorts compared in this study. In the mid-1980s, when young people belonging to the first NEET cohort completed compulsory education, youth unemployment was not a big problem in Finland and there were more work opportunities even for early school leavers in comparison with the situation 10 years later, when the second NEET cohort arrived at this first critical educational transition point. However, in 10 years, the objectives of reducing the number of early school leavers and reintegrating NEETs had risen higher on the political agenda, meaning that there was more political will and resources for supporting school-to-work transitions of those defined as being at risk of educational and social exclusion.

The findings of this study show that, although the societal situation, in terms of youth labour market opportunities, was more favourable for the NEETs of the mid-1980s, the NEETs belonging to the later cohort had more often succeeded in entering into stable labour market careers. One explanation for this finding may be that under favourable economic conditions with relatively good labour market opportunities, including for early school leavers, those who remain outside of education and work for a long period are most likely the ones who need special support to be employed or to continue in education. Under a more difficult economic situation, the social composition of the group of NEETs may be more mixed, including those who have relatively good chances of getting back on track as times get better. The results can also be explained by the fact that since the beginning of the 1990s much more effort has been put into reducing dropout, early school leaving and interruption of upper secondary education. Since early experiences of labour market exclusion may lead to subsequent labour market marginality and social exclusion (Cieslik & Simpson, 2006), the availability of supportive institutional resources is crucial particularly at the early stages of one's labour market career.

Based on the results of this study, the consequences of dropout and educational exclusion are not equal for young people coming from different social backgrounds. This held true with both cohorts. Those coming from more advantaged social backgrounds, in terms of parental education, had more often succeeded in ending up in stable employment careers compared to the offspring of the less well educated parents.

The fact that educational attainment and outcomes in large part are linked to one's social class background is one of the repeated findings in the sociology of education. This finding has been theorized from different and often contradictory viewpoints. In the course of the past few decades, there has been an increase in the utilization of conceptual approaches which attempt to overcome the theoretical divide between structure and agency (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Evans, 2007) present in the conflicting views of structuralist (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976) and rational action theories (e.g. Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997). Consequently, class-based educational inequalities are nowadays seen as resulting from the complex interaction between family resources, schooling processes, institutional arrangements and individual agency and identity construction.

In the case of later inclusion and exclusion of the NEETs, one of the crucial issues is their willingness or unwillingness to attend second-chance education. In a qualitative study by Cieslik and Simpson (2006) on the school-to-work transitions of young adults with poor basic skills, there were many instances where young adults participating in the study did not take up the employment or training opportunities that were available and offered to them. The conditions preventing the young people to seize the opportunities were formed by structural and agency factors. Hence, the study by Cieslik and Simpson (2006) calls for a theoretical approach where both willingness and unwillingness to

participate in various forms of education is explored as a life-historical process, and as an outcome of the interaction between structure and agency.

Drawing on Bourdieu, and his concept of 'habitus' in particular, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) argue that educational decisions, including not to participate in education, can only be understood in terms of the life histories of those who make them, wherein identity has evolved through interaction with significant others and with the culture in which the subject has lived and is living. Habitus, as conceptualized by Bourdieu (1977, pp. 82–83) is 'a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions'. The basic structure of habitus consists of the beliefs, values, meanings and principles of action that an individual has internalized in his/her social and cultural environment, during the years of primary socialization in particular. It is, hence, predisposing individuals from different classes toward certain actions and choices (Biggart, Järvinen & Parreira do Amaral, 2015).

Based on Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) speak of *horizons for action*, which both limit and enable our view of the world and the choices we can make in it. These are segmented, in that no one considers the whole range of possible opportunities in education or the labour market. Within their horizons, people make *pragmatically* rational decisions. This means that the decision to participate in education can be a rational decision in a certain cultural and life-historical context. The more distant the values and cultural practices of a given form of education are from those of the individual's own social and cultural background, the more difficult it is for him/her to experience participating in education as a subjectively significant and meaningful choice (Järvinen & Vanttaja, 2011). Thus, attending second-chance education may be a more attractive option for NEETs from families with highly educated parents in comparison with their working-class counterparts (Reay, 2010). Not only are educational aspirations influenced through parental education (Biggart, Järvinen & Parreira do Amaral, 2015) but higher-educated, middle-class parents have also more social and economic resources (Weis, 2010), which they can utilize to smooth their offspring's employment and get them 'back on track'. On the other hand, attending second-chance education and its successful completion may also widen the horizons for action of those coming from disadvantaged social backgrounds.

As noted earlier, the relationship between the social background of the NEETs and their later labour market careers was different before and after the economic recession of the early 1990s. In the mid-1980s, dropping out of education had very different consequences to young people coming from different social backgrounds. In 10 years, however, the impact of social background on the later labour market careers of NEETs had declined. One explanation for this may be the political investments in second-chance education and training opportunities with the aim of reducing educational and social exclusion. Since difficulties in school-to-work transitions largely occur because of young

people's lack of educational and social resources (Cieslik & Simpson, 2006), these investments are likely to have benefitted NEETs coming from low-educated, less resourceful families.

While this study highlighted the importance of social class background in educational and labour market exclusion of young people, the other important factors contributing to the formation of individual life courses and careers, such as gender and immigrant status, had to be left out of the analyses because of the limited space of one chapter. Concentrating solely on the effects of social class background can mask the importance of other background factors on the educational and labour market outcomes of individuals. Across Europe, social class background is strongly connected to the level of education achieved, while gender has a stronger effect on the field of study selected. Countries, however, vary in the extent to which gender and social class background affect young people's labour market outcomes (Iannelli & Smyth, 2008). While gender differences in educational attainment have disappeared or even reversed in recent years in many European countries, including Finland (Iannelli & Smyth, 2008), it has been demonstrated in several studies (e.g. Kolehmainen, 2002; Kivinen & Nurmi, 2009) that education is not an equal resource for men and women in Finland. Men tend to reach a higher socio-economic status and a better salary than women with a similar level of education. Moreover, international long-term studies have shown that the significance of social class background on the educational attainment of young people may be different for males and females. Moreover, how social class and gender are intertwined in the reproduction of class position takes different forms among different social classes and in different socio-historical contexts (Breen et al., 2010).

At present, the integration of immigrants is an emergent issue across Europe, including Finland (see also Chapter 5). Until these days, however, the number of immigrants—that is, the population of foreign-origin residents—has been relatively low in Finland. Due to this, it has been rather typical that, in studies on educational transitions and trajectories of young people, first- and second-generation immigrants, that is, young people who were themselves born abroad and those whose parents were born abroad, respectively, have been treated as one group (e.g. Kalalahti, Varjo & Jahnukainen, 2017). In these cases, terms such as *young people of immigrant background* or *immigrant-origin youths* have been used to refer to both first- and second-generation immigrants. These studies have shown that young people of immigrant background have more difficulties in educational transitions and they drop out of education more often than their Finnish-origin counterparts (Järvinen & Vanttaja, 2013; Kalalahti, Varjo & Jahnukainen, 2017). Although the number of immigrants in Finland has been and still is considerably lower than in comparison with many other European countries, it has been rising rapidly in recent years. At the time when the follow-up of the first cohort of this study began, in 1985, immigrants constituted only 1% of those living in Finland (Järvinen & Vanttaja, 2001). In 2017 the equivalent share was 7% (Statistics

Finland). While the number of immigrants has increased in Finland, young people of immigrant background, because of the difficulties they face in educational and school-to-work transitions, have been defined as one of the special target groups of Finnish education, employment and youth policies. At the same time, the analysis of Finnish policy documents on lifelong learning policies between the years 2006 and 2016 reveals that one important aspect of Finnish policy that texts do not discuss at all is the class structure and inequitable life opportunities for young people coming from different socio-economic groups (Rinne et al., 2016). Further, despite the gender inequalities that have been shown as existing in education and working life (e.g. Brunila & Ylöstalo, 2015), gender issues are not particularly emphasized in the above-mentioned policy documents either.

This study shows a still significant but declining relationship between social class background and the labour market careers of young people by using results from two cohorts of Finnish NEETs as an example of this relationship. However, paying attention to the years before and after the economic recession of the early 1990s means, that in the future, the strength of this relationship should be tested by utilizing more recent data. Recent policy changes in Nordic countries, including Finland, may have led to an increase of inequalities between the life opportunities for young people coming from different social backgrounds. The success of reintegrating disadvantaged young people is dependent not only on the available resources and supportive measures but also transition policy priorities. Since NEETs tend to come from disadvantaged social and cultural backgrounds, and also tend to have histories of school failure, the challenge for the educational system is to find ways to deal not only with pupil diversity but also with educational inequality (Lamb, 2011). The existence of good quality second-chance education and training opportunities that pay attention not only to the special needs of young people but also to their social and cultural background is a crucial way to improve the life chances of young people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In Finland, as in other Nordic countries, the education system has traditionally been viewed as part of an egalitarian, redistributive welfare model, where education has been considered as a means of reducing social inequalities. The focus in education policy has been on developing common schools and inclusive programmes (Markussen, 2011; Berisha et al., 2017). However, as a comparative study on Swedish, Danish and Finnish transition policies of the last two decades (Jørgensen, Järvinen & Lundahl, 2019) shows, the current policies in these three countries in many cases diverge from many features ascribed to a Nordic welfare model and transition regime (see Walther, 2006). In all three countries, the transition policies aimed at reintegrating NEETs and early school leavers have shifted towards an individualizing policy approach (Pohl & Walther, 2007) by increasingly adopting coercive measures, reducing social support and making young people individually responsible for their

successful transitions. To make young people coming from disadvantaged social backgrounds responsible for their own employment and inclusion is at the same time one of the best guarantees of maintaining inequalities between social classes in terms of educational, employment and life opportunities for young people.

Notes

[1] Either mother's or father's education, depending on who was the most educated parent in the family.

[2] A similar classification of young people's employment careers first emerged in Nyyssölä's (1999) study, in which the employment careers of one age cohort of Finnish young people (n=140,135) was followed from 1980 until 1993.

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Transition from School to Work

Icelandic Young People in NEET

Johanna Rosa Arnardottir

The transition from school to work is more complicated now than in the past (Bynner & Parsons, 2002; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Lauder et al., 2006; Lundahl, 2011; Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014; Roberts, 2009). By analysing young people (16–34) who are not in employment, education or training, i.e. the two main social and economic areas of society, our understanding of the situation of this group that is particularly at risk for a social exclusion can improve. According to social exclusion theory, the loss of employment constitutes the first step of social exclusion, which leads to further hindrances. The young people concerned are not active and therefore face economic and social obstacles that often lead to multidimensional deprivation such as being out of the educational system, being unemployed and not participating in leisure activities. This situation blocks individuals from the main social activities (Burchard, Le Grand & Piachaud, 2002; Gallie, 2004; Gough, Esenshitz & Mcculloch, 2006).

Leaving the school system and entering the labour market is one of the first steps young people take into adulthood. Researchers have noticed that successful transition processes tend to be related to the future well-being of the individual. However, although the educational expansion was meant to increase equality, there is

still inequality in job opportunities and education, where family background influences the outcomes and this group of young people with no qualifications lacks job opportunities (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Goldthorpe, 2007; Oskarsdottir, 1995; Roberts, 2009; Wolbers, 2014). Research has also shown that countries differ in their emphasis on preparing young people through general academic education or vocational education or training at upper secondary level (Arnardottir, 2014; Kerckhoff, 2000; Lundahl, 2011; Müller & Gangl, 2003; Olofsson & Panican, 2008; Olafsson & Arnardottir, 2008; Oskarsdottir, 1995; Walther, 2006).

The opportunity structure theory by Roberts (2009) assumes that it is more common that young people lack opportunities than that they lack ambition or talent. A successful transition from school to work is primarily formed by the interrelationships between family background, education, labour market processes and employers' recruitment practices. These factors are valuable in comparing the current situation with the past. According to the theory, imbalances of transition from school to work lie primarily in the opportunities regarding which different groups are required to be reflexive. Young people need to be reflexive, in the sense that they have to make choices set by institutions and the society, in the context of other actors. In a traditional society, young people generally had few choices, but in the modern society they have to choose their future based on more uncertainty and risk. Even though the characteristics of the opportunity structures have changed in the last decades, the same processes may maintain them. According to social network theory, however, information is the key to successful matching between education and occupation, where employees search for suitable employers and vice versa. The information can come from the family, employers or the school system (Granovetter, 1995; Müller & Gangl, 2003; Rosenbaum & Jones, 2000). Thus, job-searching method matters. Young people often lack job experience and job contacts and these factors are possibly affecting inactivity among the NEET group.

The NEET concept has proved to be a powerful tool to focus on the problems of youth in the labour market and the multifaceted nature of their vulnerabilities such as for young mothers and those with disabilities (Eurofound, 2016; see also Chapter 2). This research adds new knowledge about the NEET group in Iceland and young people's entry into the labour market (first job), an area that has not been previously studied (Arnardottir, 2014). Former research on transition from school to work in Iceland (Olafsson & Arnardottir, 2008; Oskarsdottir, 1995, 2000) has shown high school dropout rates and weak links between school and the labour market. At the same time, many students work alongside studying, and, in general, there is a high demand for youth labour. Before the economic crisis in 2008, Iceland did not have a large array of measures to activate individuals, since the employment rate was generally very high and the unemployment rate low and short-term (Olafsson & Arnardottir, 2008; Thorlacius & Olafsson, 2010; Olafsson, 2012). There has also been more focus on disability welfare recipients and on recognizing the importance of employment or educational opportunities among inactive young people (Arnardottir, 2016a, 2016b; Hannesson, 2013; Jokumsen & Traustadottir, 2014; Nordens

Välfärdscenter, 2016; OECD, 2013; Thorlacius & Olafsson, 2010). However, high dropout rates indicated that some youths were facing difficulties in the labour market. Before the economic crisis in 2008, a group of youth was already inactive in society and in need of pursuing further studies (Arnardottir, 2008, 2014; Gunnlaugsson, 2008; Olafsson & Arnardottir, 2008).

Here we will focus on the group of young people in Iceland who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). The hypothesis is that they are more likely than other youth to have only completed education below upper secondary education and their parents are more likely to have low educational levels. They are also more likely to get a job via formal means such as public employment offices (PEOs) and advertisements compared to others and their first job is usually unskilled. We assume that this is the case even when controlled for gender, age, residence, ethnicity and disability.

Method

The research method is quantitative. The data are based on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) regularly undertaken by Statistics Iceland, which is also a part of the Labour Force Survey of Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Union). Data were obtained from standardized questionnaires by telephone interviews. The data collection represents the population aged 16 to 74 in Iceland, with a random sample of about 4,000 and a response rate of 80–85%. The key concepts are based on the definitions of the International Labour Organization and Eurostat. Data for 2006–2008 refer to the whole year but in 2009 only the second quarter. It is of great value to have a sample of the NEET group based on the random sample of the LFS. It is also possible to generalize results to the whole population, although there is a need for caution when responses are few. This large dataset gives possibilities of comparing the situation of young people with those who are older, and find what is special for youth. These were the newest data available when this research started and the first time an ad hoc module including supplementary statistics on first job was conducted in order to enable investigation of labour market entry in Iceland.

Not in employment, education or training (NEET; see also Chapter 2) are respondents that have not been taking part in regular education or training during the last four weeks and those who are not employed, i.e. who have worked for pay or profit one hour or more in the reference week or are absent from the work they usually carry out. Apprentices' on-the-job training is classified as 'in education'.

Educational level refers to the highest level of education successfully completed classified according to the International Standard Classification of Education 1997, ISCED97. Four categories are used here: 1) below upper secondary level, that is, below ISCED 3; 2) vocational education and training (VET), i.e. those who have completed ISCED 3c or 4c; 3) general education, which refers to those who have completed ISCED 3a, 3b, 4a or 4b; and 4) tertiary education, which refers to those who have completed ISCED 5 or 6. Occupational groups are classified according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations, ISCO-88.

The following questions were only used in an ad hoc module of LFS in the second quartile 2009 among 16- to 34-year-old respondents (n=1169):

First job is the first job respondents had for more than three months after completing formal education for the last time, and without any scheduled further education. Only jobs for pay or profit are included; apprenticeships and summer jobs are excluded. Those who had had a first job got a question about the method they used to get their first job and occupation.

Parents' educational level is classified into low (ISCED 1–3c short), medium (ISECD 3a, b, c two years or longer and ISCED 4), high (ISCED 5, 6). This is the highest educational level at least one parent has completed.

The chi-square test is used to test for significant differences between groups. Significance is indicated by stars, where one star corresponds to $p<0.05$; two stars $p<0.01$ and three stars $p<0.001$. Logistics regressions are used to show which variables predict if youth belong to the NEET group or not. Finally, the comparison with the UK, Spain, Germany and the Nordic countries is based on published data by OECD and Eurostat.

Results

Low educational attainment and early school leaving is believed to be one of the main causes of the marginalization of young people (see for example Gallie, 2004; Halvorsen et al., 2013; Olafsson & Arnardottir, 2008; Oskarsdottir, 1995; Roberts, 2009). Dropout can influence vulnerability in times of crisis when there are fewer job opportunities than normally, and that was of concern in Iceland due to the crisis in 2008. Over a longer time, dropout rates in Iceland have been higher than in most other Western countries, including other Nordic countries (Arnardottir, 2008; Nordens Välfärdscenter, 2011; OECD, 2011a; Olofsson & Panican, 2008; Oskarsdottir, 1995; Valkonen & Vihriälä, 2014. Also see Chapters 2 and 4 in this book).

Table 3.1 shows the highest educational level successfully completed among 16- to 34-year-olds in Iceland in 2009, by gender, age, residence, parental education and ethnicity. The results reveal that a higher percentage of males than females had not completed upper secondary education or tertiary education. A higher percentage of males than females had completed vocational education and training (VET) and a higher percentage of females than males had completed general education below tertiary education. Similarly, a higher percentage of females than males had completed tertiary education. It also shows that higher percentage of those living in the capital region had completed some education. Those with parents who had higher education did better with regards of completing some education. However, there was no significant difference if the parents were born in Iceland or not. This is in contrast to the findings in other countries, for example Sweden—see Chapter 4. A higher percentage of those in the NEET group had only completed education below upper secondary level or VET compared to others (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Highest educational level successfully completed among 16- to 34-year-olds by gender in Iceland in 2009.

	Below upper sec. level %	VET %	General %	Tertiary %	N
All	46.8	11.5	22.5	19.3	1167
Gender*					
Males	52.7	15.4	16.3	15.6	565
Females	41.2	7.8	28.2	22.8	602
Residence*					
Capital region	41.1	10.9	24.5	22.7	799
Other regions	59.5	13.7	15.6	11.2	365
Parents' education*					
Low	50.2	12.4	15.5	21.9	233
Medium	44.9	16.8	22.9	15.3	463
High	44.8	5.5	26.6	23.1	433
Parents' ethnicity					
Not born in Iceland	40.0	10.8	20.0	29.2	65
One born in Iceland	55.7	8.6	22.9	12.9	70
Both born in Iceland	46.5	11.7	22.8	19.0	1024
NEET status*					
NEET	56.8	17.6	14.2	11.5	148
Others	45.4	10.7	23.6	20.4	1014

***p<0.001.

Table 3.2 shows percentage of youths (16–34-year-olds) who were not in education or employment, by gender and educational level, in 2006–2009. About 5–6% had not been in employment or education and training during 2006–2008. The period of 2006–2008 is used in the analysis of the NEET group, as this was a small group of respondents. In 2009, there was a significant increase, due to the economic crisis in Iceland, starting in October 2008. A higher percentage of males than females was inactive. Those who were least educated faced a higher risk of not being in education or employment, and those with tertiary education were likely to be engaged in education, training or work. Interestingly, those who had completed VET were more likely than those who completed a general education not to be in education or employment.

Table 3.2: Percentage of population aged 16–34 not in employment, education or training by gender and education in Iceland.

	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %	2009 %
All	5.6	5.3	6.2	12.7
Gender	***	***	***	
Males	3.4	3.4	4.4	14.0
Females	7.7	7.2	8.0	11.5
Education	**	**	*	***
Below upper secondary level	6.9	6.7	6.9	15.4
Vocational education (VET)	4.9	4.4	6.4	19.4
General (academic) education	4.3	3.8	4.1	8.1
Tertiary level	4.1	4.0	6.5	7.6

Significant difference by gender 2006–2008, by education 2006–2009.

The focus is here on the situation of the NEET group in Iceland. In 2009, almost 13% of 16- to 34-year-olds were not in employment, education or training, which means a doubling compared to 2008. Here we start by looking at what kinds of reasons the respondents (aged 16–64) gave for leaving the last job or business (see Table 3.3). The results show that own illness or disability was the most frequently mentioned reason in 2006–2008, especially among 35- to 64-year-olds. For the youngest group, about 18% said a job of limited duration had ended, but the equivalent figure was only about 5–6% among the older participants. Between 14 and 17% said that the main reason was dismissal or being redundant. Here it is interesting to notice the small differences between age groups. From the answers it was obvious that there were many different reasons behind leaving the last job; a high percentage mentioned this. Research has shown that there is an association between unemployment and incidence of new disability claimants (Thorlacius & Olafsson, 2008), which could also be an explanation here. In 2009, a much higher percentage gave the reason that they had been dismissed and a lower percentage gave other reasons. These data refer only to those in the NEET group and therefore it seems that, when the situation in the labour market is worsening for the workforce as a whole, it is probably not as shameful to indicate the reasons for being dismissed or made redundant as it is in better times. A lower percentage give reasons such as own illness, but a higher percentage that they were in education or training and a lower percentage give other reasons (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Main reason for leaving last job or business among the NEET group in Iceland.

Period	Age		
	16–24 %	25–34 %	35–64 %
2006–2008***			
Dismissed or made redundant	17.1	15.1	14.2
A job of limited duration has ended	17.5	5.8	5.4
Looking after children or incapacitated adults	4.0	10.8	3.5
Own illness or disability	18.7	38.2	52.9
Education or training	8.7	11.4	1.2
Other reasons	34.1	18.8	22.8
Total	100.0 (N=252)	100.0 (N=325)	100.0 (N=1188)
2009**			
Dismissed or made redundant	62.5	48.6	50.0
A job of limited duration has ended	6.3	4.3	1.5
Looking after children or incapacitated adults	0.0	1.4	2.3
Own illness or disability	10.4	18.6	30.3
Education or training	12.5	10.0	0.8
Other reasons	8.3	17.1	15.2
Total	100.0 (N=48)	100.0 (N=70)	100.0 (N=132)

$**p<0.01; ***p<0.001.$

Research has shown that a higher percentage of claimants is registered at public employment offices in times of crisis, which probably also made it easier in people's mind to receive public help during higher unemployment (Arnardottir, 2013; Rosenbaum & Jones, 2000; Granovetter, 1995). Many of those who belonged to the NEET group were unemployed, or about a half of those aged 16–24 in 2006–2008 but about 71% in the second quartile of 2009 (Arnardottir, 2013, 2014). In 2006–2008, higher percentages of the NEET group were not seeking employment but even by 2009 between 29–46% of youths were not seeking employment. As the unemployed got older, more than two thirds of them were not seeking employment. Hidden unemployment

possibly increases with age and it is more common under 'normal' circumstances than in times of crises, when a much higher percentage of the population faces unemployment and therefore it is possible that the shame of being inactive is not as great. Hammer (2000) believes that being unemployed in Iceland carries more stigma than it does in Denmark, where unemployment has been high for decades. She found that mental health problems were more frequent in Iceland than in other Nordic countries, but economic deprivation had strong association with mental health problems. This could also indicate that the definition of unemployment is rather strict, as Roberts (2009) mentions, where some youths are classified as out of the labour force instead of unemployed.

Table 3.4 shows the reasons for not seeking employment among the NEET group. We see that own illness or disability was more often the reason for not searching for work among the older cohort compared to those who were younger. Caretaking was more common among 25- to 34-year-olds than among the others. Hence, two thirds of the 16- to 24-year-olds indicated other reasons for not searching employment and about 40–50% of the 25- to 34-year-olds. This implies that, when people are younger, there are various reasons for inactivity but as they get older the main reasons are their own illness or disability. The results also show that caretaking is more often the reason for females but own illnesses or disability among males.

Table 3.4: Reasons for not searching employment by age among the NEET group in Iceland, %.

	All			Males			Females		
	Own illness or disability	Care-taking	Other reason	Own illness or disability	Care-taking	Other reason	Own illness or disability	Care-taking	Other reason
2006–2008*									
16–24	26.8	7.8	65.4	38.0	0.0	62.0	21.4	11.7	67.0
25–34	40.2	20.1	39.6	60.3	5.5	34.2	34.7	24.2	41.1
35–64	71.0	9.1	19.9	75.6	0.0	24.4	69.2	12.6	18.2
2009*									
16–24	25.0	6.3	68.8	—	—	—	—	—	—
25–34	43.9	9.8	46.3	—	—	—	—	—	—
35–64	72.5	4.2	23.2	—	—	—	—	—	—

***p<0.001 for All. N for 2006–8=2038; N for 2009=199; Caretaking=Looking after children or incapacitated adults.

Table 3.5: The first job of more than three months after completing formal education by NEET group compared to others among 16- to 34-year-olds in Iceland, 2009.

	Higher skilled %	Clerks %	Service, sales %	Agric. fishery, craft %	Low-skilled %	Total %	N
NEET	11.0	5.5	37.6	19.3	26.6	100.0	109
Others	25.5	9.7	28.4	16.2	20.3	100.0	631
Total	23.4	9.1	29.7	16.6	21.2	100.0	740

Significant differences p<0.01. Higher skilled refers to manager, professional and associate professionals according to ISCO-88 and low-skilled to elementary and plant and machine operators.

Respondents aged 16–34 were asked about their first job in 2009, that is, the first paid job they had worked at for more than three months after completing formal education, the last time, and without scheduled further education. About 77% of the NEET group had already got their first job. According to the opportunity structure theory youths do not lack ambition or talent but they lack job opportunities and are at risk of being trapped in part-time positions, with less security and a bad job (Roberts, 2009). Table 3.5 shows the first job among 16- to 34-year-olds in 2009. The results show that, among the NEET group, higher percentages had worked as service or sales workers or in elementary occupations compared to others. This result indicates that young people in the NEET group, once they get a job, is more at risk of being employed in lower ranks of the occupational ladder. It is possible that they are in so-called dead-end jobs, with less chance of promotion, and with fewer opportunities of attending courses and suitable on-the-job training at the beginning of their career.

Those who had had their first job were asked about the method they used to get their first job. According to research, young people tend to lack a social network to help them get a job and they therefore may be more vulnerable when entering the labour market than other jobseekers. In particular, youth who have not done well in school need to convince employers of their value (Granovetter, 1995; Rosenbaum & Jones, 2000). Therefore, it would be easy to suppose that the lack of social contact makes the NEET group more likely to use formal means when applying for a job compared to others. However, that does not seem to be the case at the time studied here, as a similar proportion of the NEET group compared to others got their first job by using formal means (see Table 3.6). A possible explanation is that, in Iceland, young people use the same methods in job-searching irrespective of their parents' level of education, while those who have completed tertiary education are less likely than others to use personal contacts (Arnardottir, 2014). Results are also in accordance with

Table 3.6: Method of job-searching used to find the first job by NEET group compared to others among 16- to 34-year-olds in Iceland, 2009.

	Formal means %	Direct application %	Personal contact %	Others %	Total %	N
NEET	21.9	35.2	41.9	1.0	100.0	105
Others	18.2	40.0	36.7	5.1	100.0	622
Total	18.7	39.3	37.4	4.5	100.0	727

No significant differences.

Oskarsdottir's (1995) findings, showing no significant differences with regard to job-searching method between those who dropped out from school and others. Hence, being marginalized in the Icelandic labour market cannot be traced to the job-searching method they use.

This also means that youth at risk of social exclusion were using similar tactics to get a job and they also seemed to use personal contacts to similar extent. Although about 34% were getting job via personal contacts; that was the case for those coming from both higher-class and lower-class families with regard to the highest educational level at least one parent had completed. We must acknowledge that, although youths with parents who have completed tertiary education are more likely to complete tertiary education (Arnardottir, 2014), those without a degree from higher education can be at risk of social exclusion to a similar extent as those who have parents with less than upper secondary education. The social networks of tertiary educated parents are not able to help those with lower qualifications. Hence, the present study indicates that it seemed to require a certain educational standard before getting access to the same social network as the parents. This could be of interest to understand further under what conditions children from better educated parents are not getting ahead. We should have in mind that apprenticeship training is rather rare in Iceland, and those who have parents with tertiary education are the least likely to attend vocational education and training that could be of value when entering into the labour market.

Research has shown that youths from lower-class families are those who are at risk of social exclusion in the labour market (Gallie, 2004; Gough, Esenshitz & Mcculloch, 2006; Goldthorpe, 2007; Roberts, 2009). We could therefore expect that parental education is lower among the NEET group compared to others. We have seen here that illness and disability are affecting employment among youths. About 20% of the working-age population in the average OECD country suffers from a mental disorder in a clinical sense (mental illness that reaches the clinical threshold of a diagnosis of psychiatric classification systems). Surprisingly, better awareness of this illness has mostly led to more

exclusion from the workforce (OECD, 2011b). Illnesses as mental disorders may affect school performance and increase the risk of dropping out of school, with negative consequences for working life. Those who suffer from mental illnesses are less likely than the rest of the population to hold onto their job, as well as get jobs, in the lower rank of the occupational structure (OECD, 2011b). Research has shown that about 12% of the Icelandic NEET group aged 16–34 were permanently disabled in 2006–2008, compared to less than 1% of others, and 8% of the NEET group in 2009, compared to less than 1% of the whole population (Arnardottir, 2013). Among those aged 30 years or younger, 70% of male and 57% of female disability claimants were so because of mental or behavioural disorder (Social Insurance Administration, 2013). At this time about half of disability pensioners who are mentally ill in Iceland faced preju-dice (Hannesdottir, 2010).

As shown in Appendix, Table A.1 youth who have not completed education at upper secondary level or higher are more likely to belong to the NEET group compared to others when controlled for gender, age, residence, ethnicity, per-manent disability, parental education and whether their first job was unskilled (in elementary occupation, plant and machine operator or service and sales occupations). Age, ethnicity, health, educational level and first job have significant association with belonging to the NEET group (see Appendix Table A.1). Those aged 25–34 are more likely to belong to the NEET group compared to 16- to 24-year-olds when other variables were held constant. Those with Icelandic nationality were less likely to belong to the NEET group than those of non-Icelandic background. Disability claimants were at most risk of belong-ing to the NEET group, and, based on research, a majority of them were deal-ing with mental or behavioural disorder. However, although those dealing with illnesses were more likely to belong to the NEET group, it was not always the case because, when we controlled for disability, those youths whose first work was in the lower rank of the occupational ladder were more likely than others to be in neither employment education nor training. This result also highlights the importance of looking at various and even different situation this group of young people faces.

Table 3.7 shows the percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds who had never had a job and were not in education (NEETs), and those who had got their first job but were in education. The latter indicates a transition problem, where those who completed their formal education and started to work continued to study because they did not find their place in the labour market.

At the age of 25–34, about 6% of youths had never had a job and were not in education. Fifteen per cent of this age group had had their first job and were still in education. When analysed by these main variables, we see that higher percentages of those whose parents were not born in Iceland had not got their first job and were not in education. Among those who had already entered the labour market, a higher percentage of females than males were in education, and a higher percentage of those who lived in the capital region than outside

Table 3.7: Transition failure among 25- to 34-year-olds in Iceland, 2009.

	Never work not in education %	In education after first job %	N
All	6.2	15.1	596
Gender		*	
Males	7.0	11.3	284
Females	5.4	18.6	312
Residence		*	
Capital region	6.4	17.2	425
Other regions	5.9	10.0	170
Country of birth of parents	*		
Not in Iceland	15.1	9.4	53
One in Iceland	10.3	6.9	29
Both in Iceland	5.1	16.1	510

*$p<0.05$; Education of respondents and their parent(s) showed no significant differences.

it. It is possible that the postponed entrance into the labour market among females had much to do with increased participation in the educational system. Access to education is also an important factor, with lower participation outside the capital region.

Iceland compared to other countries

The transition from school to work in Iceland is compared to other Nordic countries, Spain, Germany and the United Kingdom (Arnardottir, 2014; Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999; Olafsson & Arnardottir, 2008; Olafsson & Stefansson, 2005; Walther, 2006). The results are based on the ad hoc module on young people's entry into the labour market conducted in 2009. In some countries, this ad hoc module was based on the whole year, but in Iceland, Denmark, and the UK only on the second quartile of the year. The comparison of results from the ad hoc module of entry into the labour market among 15- to 34-year-olds is based on published data from Eurostat (in Iceland, the UK and Spain the data refer to 16- to 34-year-olds).

Table 3.8 shows the distribution of 15- to 34-year-olds in 2009 who left formal education within five years, by level of entry into the labour market, or levels of experience in the labour market since leaving education. In Iceland, 14%

Table 3.8: Distribution of people by level of entry into the labour market among 15- to 34-year-olds who left formal education within five years, 2009. Iceland compared to Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Spain and the UK.

	Ice-land	Den-mark	Fin-land	Nor-way	Swe-den	Ger-many	Spain	UK	EU27
Good experience	14.4	21.9	22.0	20.0	21.2	—	22.6	26.9	21.4
Fairly good experience	61.6	61.6	53.0	67.7	54.8	80.4	37.3	48.5	50.3
Moderate experience	11.7	7.9	10.0	6.0	14.1	—	21.2	14.7	15.4
Limited experience	12.2	8.5	14.9	6.3	9.8	19.6	19.0	9.9	12.9

— no information. Source: Eurostat (2012).

had a good experience (i.e. had been employed for more than one year or had a permanent contract), 62% fairly good experience (i.e. other employed), 12% moderate experience (i.e. not employed but had such experience) and 12% limited experience (i.e. not employed). A higher percentage of youths in Iceland had a good or fairly good experience than in Spain, Finland and the UK but the transition rates were not as good as in Germany, Denmark and Norway.

Although the transition experience was not so good in Iceland according to these results it is important to notice that the employment rate has been high in recent decades and among the highest in the Western world, and especially among the low-educated (Arnardottir, 2014; Olafsson & Arnardottir, 2008; Olafsson, 2012). This is still the case and it is interesting to note the differences of the employment rates among low versus highly educated, which are 20–30% in most countries but about 10% in Iceland among 25- to 34-year-olds (OECD, 2011a, 2017). However, the educational level in Iceland is rather low, although it has increased in recent years. The percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds with less than upper secondary education was 20% in Iceland in 2016, compared to 17% in Denmark, 10% in Finland, 13% in Germany, 19% in Norway, 17% in Sweden, 13% in the UK, 35% in Spain and 9% in the US (OECD, 2017).

Table 3.9 shows youth population not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2005, 2010 and 2016. The results show the lowest percentage in Iceland compared to these countries in 2005 and 2016. The percentage increases in 2010 due to the economic crisis, compared to 2005 in all countries except in Germany. It is also important to notice that higher percentages of 15- to 29-year-olds are in NEET in the UK, the US and Germany compared to the Nordic countries. Germany is known for a strong tradition of vocational education and training system, and the UK and especially the US for emphasis on general academic education. The youths who complete the vocational path are

Table 3.9: Percentage of population aged 20–24 and 15–29 not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2005, 2010 and 2016. Iceland compared to Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Spain, the UK and the US.

	2005		2010		2016	
	20–24 %	15–29 %	20–24 %	15–29 %	20–24 %	15–29 %
Denmark	8.3	8.2	12.1	10.5	9.5	8.2
Finland	13.0	10.9	15.8	12.6	17.4	13.2
Germany	18.7	14.7	13.7	12.0	10.8	9.6
Iceland	6.6	5.5	12.2	11.4	6.0	5.3
Norway	9.6	8.1	9.0	8.4	10.9	9.4
Spain	19.1	17.1	27.0	23.6	25.5	21.7
Sweden	13.4	9.2	14.2	10.3	10.8	8.2
United Kingdom	16.8	14.2	19.3	15.9	15.0	13.2
United States	15.5	13.1	19.4	16.1	15.3	14.1
OECD average*	17.3	14.9	18.8	16.0	16.2	13.9

Source: OECD (2017).

usually believed to have better prospects in the labour market than those who take the general academic pathway at upper secondary level. As shown in Table 3.8, transition experience is better in Denmark and Germany than most of the countries but in Table 3.9 a similarly high percentage is inactive in Germany in 2005 as in the UK and the US.

What these results indicate is that participation in VET can serve as a short-term solution rather than long-term success in the labour market, as other research has also shown (Arnardottir, 2014; Müller & Gangl, 2003). It also indicates that the social democratic region of the Nordic countries has lower percentages of youths in NEET than other countries. In particular, Danish youths have good or fairly good transition experience and also a rather low percentage in NEET.

The OECD figures show the lowest percentage in NEET among those aged 20–24 in Iceland compared to other countries. In Iceland, most students at upper secondary level attend general education. Active labour market measures for youths were few before the economic crisis and it is most common that students complete upper secondary education at the age of 20, but this is 18 in Spain, the UK and the US and 19 in the other countries (Eurydice, 2011). However, from 2016, general academic education at upper secondary school in Iceland takes three years to complete instead of four years.

Conclusion

The results show the situation of young people who were not in employment, education or training, i.e. the NEET group of 16- to 34-year-olds in Iceland, in the years 2006 to 2009. They were about 5% of population before the economic crisis in 2008 and increased to 13% in the second quarter of 2009. Based on figures from 2006–2008, we on average could expect under 'normal' circumstances that females are more likely than males to belong to this group and also those who have not completed upper secondary school. In time of crisis an increased number of males and those who have completed vocational education and training are in NEET. The main increase is among 25- to 34-year-olds but the younger group (16–24) probably attends school longer and especially those who have completed general education and therefore have access to university.

When looking at the main reasons in the NEET group for leaving the last job, we have seen that there are many reasons behind their inactivity. It seems that lack of job opportunities rather than lack of commitment to employment is the reason, as other researchers have shown (Gallie, 2004, 2013; Roberts, 2009; Serracant, 2014). Only a small part of the NEET group is taking care of children or adults in need of care. Own illness is the cause for about 20% and this is the main reason for the oldest group. This is important because employment among mothers and disabled individuals can reduce the risk of poverty (Esping-Andersen & Myles, 2009; Thorlacius & Olafsson, 2010).

A significant difference is found in respect to the first job. A higher percentage of the NEETs compared to others had unskilled jobs when controlled for gender, age, residence, ethnicity, parental education and disability. A lack of job opportunities seems to particularly influence the NEET group in Iceland, as could have been expected based on other research (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2009; Müller & Gangl, 2003; Quintini, Martin & Martin, 2007; Roberts, 2009; Serracant, 2014). However, the results show that the job-searching methods among the 16- to 34-year-old NEET group are not very different from those of others. The educational level of their parents shows no significant differences compared to others among 16- to 34-year-olds, although the trend is that it is lower.

Young people who start to work in the lower rank of the occupational ladder are at risk. Young people leaving the school system are in many ways vulnerable at the labour market. Inequality in education is of concern when we look at the NEET group, as they, according to research, have often experienced failures in school as well as in their jobs (see Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014). More than half of those who are mentally ill face prejudice, which possibly also influences the school and labour market career. Those who are unemployed face stigma and are less attractive to employers, and, in the case of intervention, it is more effective prior to redundancy than afterwards (Gallie, 2004, p. 19). The results show the main pattern among the NEET group in Iceland in 2006–2009, but further research is needed on the fluctuation between jobs and inactivity at the beginning

of their carrier. Furthermore, new entrants need training and support in their first job, and good transition experience can possibly reduce the risk of being NEET.

Transition experiences in Iceland are less favourable than in other countries, but the overall employment rate is higher and fewer youngsters are inactive than in other countries. A large proportion of youngsters have not completed upper secondary school and they are more likely than others to belong to the NEET group. It seems to be that hidden unemployment can be a problem and jobs available for new entrants are insufficient. According to Lundahl and Olofsson (2014), local decision makers tend to believe that young people's lack of motivation is the major reason behind school dropout in Sweden. However, a large number of factors related to the individual, the family and the school contribute to the school failure (ibid.).

Successfully entering the labour market is of major importance and youths who do not have enough skills to handle obstacles or fulfil their employer's requirements, which leads to loss of a job and feeling of failure, will probably face more obstacles in the future. Results are in accordance with the opportunity structure theory of Roberts (2009) that youth who lack education can lack job opportunities rather than ambition or talent to do well in the labour market. As predicted by the social exclusion theory, youth can enter the vicious circle of unemployment and inactivity when facing different obstacles in the beginning of their career. As shown here, some of them left their last job because they were dismissed or a job of limited duration ended, which means that they needed to find another job or continue to study. This means another entry into the labour market, facing new challenges, possibly still with low skills and no formal qualifications. Recent studies show similar results and add further to this analysis where mental health problems are of major concern among the NEET group (Anvik & Waldahl, 2016; Arnardottir, 2016a, 2016b; Bjarkadottir, 2018; Nordens Välfärdscenter, 2016; Rannsóknir og greining, 2017; Kolouh–Soderlund & Lagercrantz, 2016). For some of them, lack of school performance can be traced to dyslexia (Vilhelmsdottir, 2017). Only some of those who are registered as unemployed at PEO attend any courses, and there are example of youths who are socially isolated and are in need of further help (Anvik & Waldahl, 2016; Arnardottir, 2016a, 2016b). There is considerable movement into and out of the NEET status and some of them are not registered at the public employment offices and will therefore not have access to interventions offered (Arnardottir, 2013, 2014, 2016b; Eurofound, 2016; Quintini, Martin & Martin, 2007).

Intervention needs to focus on various aspects related to a low educational level, vulnerability when they enter the labour market, illness and disability, which may also develop if they are not helped to adapt successfully in the society. Intervention that focuses on employment seems to help some youth to adapt into the labour market (Hannesson, 2013; Müller & Gangl, 2003; Olafsson, 2012; Roberts, 2009; Kolouh–Soderlund & Lagercrantz, 2016; Tamesberger, Leitgöb & Bacher, 2014). Hence, such jobs must lead to further career development. Financial obstacles should not prevent youngsters from attending formal or informal education or training and there must be access to individual counselling regardless of young people being registered as unemployed or not.

Appendix

Table A.1: Predicting whether youths aged 16–34 belong to the NEET group. Logistics regression.

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR
Female=1	-0.33	0.19	0.72	-0.34	0.19	0.71	-0.27	0.19	0.76	-0.28	0.20	0.75
Age 25-34=1	0.36	0.20	1.44	0.34	0.20	1.41	0.55**	0.22	1.74	0.49*	0.21	1.64
Outside=1	-0.22	0.21	0.80	-0.26	0.22	0.77	-0.35	0.22	0.71	-0.34	0.21	0.71
Icelandic=1	-1.12**	0.35	0.33	-1.1**	0.35	0.33	-1.06**	0.35	0.35	-1.1**	0.36	0.33
Disabled=1	3.78***	0.79	43.63	3.73***	0.79	41.7	3.56***	0.80	35.2	3.62***	0.80	37.2
Parents educ. low=1				0.27	0.23	1.31	0.23	0.23	1.26	0.22	0.23	1.24
Below upper sec.=1							0.54**	0.21	1.72	0.48*	0.21	1.62
First job low=1										0.71***	0.19	2.03
Constant	-0.97*	0.39	0.38	-1.03**	0.39	0.36	-1.44***	0.43	0.24	-1.62***	0.43	0.20

B is the logistic regression coefficient; SE is standard error; OR is odds ratio or e^B; dependent variables: NEET group: are not employed in previous week and not in education or training in past four weeks (1), Others (0); Independent variables are dichotomous: Gender, where males=0 and females=1; Age, where 16–24=0 and 25–34=1; Residence, where capital region=0 and outside capital region=1; Ethnicity, where Icelandic=1 and others=0; Disabled refers to those permanently disabled=1, others=0; Parents education is low=1, others=0; Below upper sec are those with education below upper secondary level=1 compared to others=0; and First job low=1 means those that got first job in elementary occupations, plant and machine operators or in sales and service occupations compared to others=0.
Model 1: χ^2model (5,1123)=50.9 p<0.001; Nagelkerke R Square 0.085.
Model 2: χ^2model (6,1123)=52.3 p<0.001; Nagelkerke R Square 0.087.
Model 3: χ^2model (7,1123)=58.9 p<0.001; Nagelkerke R Square 0.098.
Model 4: χ^2model (8,1123)=72.1 p<0.001; Nagelkerke R Square 0.119.
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

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Winding Paths through School and After

Young Swedes of Migrant Origin Who Failed in Upper Secondary School

Michael Lindblad and Lisbeth Lundahl

Departing from careership theory, this chapter aims to add to knowledge about school careers and school-to-work transitions of young people with a migrant background, here referring to individuals born outside or in Sweden whose parents are first-generation immigrants.[1] More specifically, we want to increase the understanding of the processes resulting in a school failure, and the subsequent process when the young person tries to enter the labour market and/or strengthen his/her educational qualifications. The analysis is based on life-history interviews with 27 Swedish young adults (21–23 years old), most of them from refugee families of non-European origins. All of the respondents left school without completing upper secondary education. Few previous studies have focused on both the school years ending in dropout and subsequent careers of early school leavers, as reported by the young adults themselves (for exceptions, see e.g. Henderson et al., 2007). As discussed in the following section, political discourses, official statistics and research often portray gloomy prospects for young early school leavers generally, and those of migrant origin particularly. However, our research provides more nuanced indications, as the young adults interviewed described not only difficulties in school

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and later life but also factors that could facilitate their careers, particularly if schools and other institutions provided more professional and timely support.

Notes on school failure, dropout and school-to-work transitions

Rather than making a decision to drop out from school at a certain point of time, the young person usually follows a process over several years where multiple factors interact and result in a school failure. These factors are related to both the student and the family, to educational practices, and policies (Dale, 2010; Lundahl et al., 2017; Rumberger, 2011). Learning problems, low previous academic achievement, disability and mental problems are factors at the individual level associated with higher risks of school failure (Casillas et al., 2012; Myklebust, 2012; Quiroga et al., 2013). Scarcity of socio-economic resources, e.g. low incomes and educational levels and high mobility as well as social problems in the family and neighbourhood, are also strongly correlated to young people leaving school without upper secondary qualifications (Østergaard Larsen, Jensen & Pilegaard Jensen, 2014; Rumberger, 2011). A factor that has received less attention until recently is that school itself may contribute to failure (de Witte & Rogge, 2013). Inability to detect early warnings, insufficient provision of individual support, neglect of bullying, and in some cases even discrimination against or harassment of students by staff are school-related factors that have been shown to contribute to truancy and poor academic results (Cornell et al., 2013; Elffers, 2012; Lamote et al., 2013). Higher proportions of students of migrant and ethnic minority backgrounds leave school without complete grades than other students, but several studies have shown that socio-economic conditions strongly contribute to such differences (Elffers, 2012; Lundahl & Lindblad, 2018).

Nearly all Swedish teenagers continue to some kind of upper secondary education—academic or vocational—after leaving compulsory school. The programmes are normally of three years' duration, except shorter, so-called introductory programmes (before 2011 'the individual programme') intended to help students to become eligible for a three-year programme. Special upper secondary schools, targeting young people with a mild learning disability, provide four-year programmes. In 2017, almost 90% of young people with Swedish-born parents were eligible for one of the academic national programmes and slightly more than 90% for a national vocational programme. The corresponding figures for students with foreign-born parents, who were born in Sweden themselves or had attended a Swedish school from grade 1, were slightly lower. However, less than half of those who had arrived in Sweden at a later stage had eligibility for an academic or vocational upper secondary programme (Skolverket, 2018a) and were hence referred to an introductory programme. The proportion of school-age children of migrant background has increased faster than the proportion of the whole migrant population, especially since 2005. This group constituted approximately one quarter of all students in compulsory schools in 2016 (Lundahl & Lindblad, 2018). Within the group of children with a non-Swedish background, the boys had somewhat

lower qualification rates than the girls (Skolverket, 2018a). In 2017, 78% of students with Swedish-born parents had obtained a degree within four years of starting at upper secondary education, while the corresponding proportion among students with a migrant background was 50%. Gender is also a significant factor, as girls had around 5% higher success rates than boys (Skolverket, 2018b).

Employment difficulties hit early school leavers particularly hard

The European and Nordic labour markets of the early 2000s offer young people with no secondary qualifications far fewer job opportunities than a few decades ago. Industrial restructuring, offshoring work to low-wage countries and automation of production and services have reduced numbers of entry jobs considerably. After the latest economic crisis, youth unemployment rates and numbers of those not employed, in education or training (NEETs) have stayed at high levels. In addition, part-time and insecure employment has risen considerably due to 'flexibilisation' (Blossfeld et al., 2008; OECD, 2015). While young people of non-European origin tend to be over-represented among both young unemployed and NEETs in the European Union, the proportions of young NEETs in Sweden, both Swedish and foreign born, are considerably lower than the European Union average (Figure 4.1).
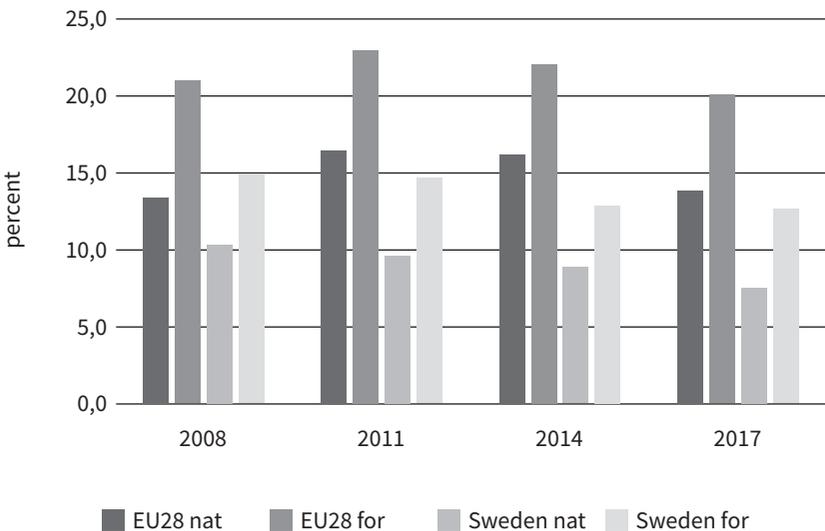
Figure 4.1: Proportions of young people (18–24), native (nat) and foreign born (for), in the European Union (EU 28) and Sweden who were not in employment, education or training in 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017.[2]

Source: Eurostat (2018).

A plethora of international studies and statistics show that dropping out and leaving school early increase risks of unemployment, unsatisfactory working conditions, poverty and poor health (e.g. Brunello & De Paola, 2013; Lamb & Markussen, 2011). Youths with an immigrant background are over-represented among the non-completers, as are youths from homes with little economic and cultural capital, and disabled young people (Dale, 2010; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). As shown, these categories may be overlapping. In the 2010s, Sweden granted more refugees asylum than most other European Union countries, in proportion to its population, and accepted the most unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in absolute numbers. Sweden displays a considerable achievement gap between students born in Sweden and students with foreign backgrounds, particularly those who arrived after the age of seven (Lundahl & Lindblad, 2018). A general finding that immigrants, particularly refugees, tend to be at the margins of the labour market in most countries can be partly explained by lower-than-average educational attainment (OECD, 2010). However, socio-economic background and being a refugee, migrant or guest worker are also contributory factors (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010). In 2017, the unemployment rate for foreign-born people eligible to work in Sweden was among the highest in the OECD countries (15%), and most different from that of the native-born population (OECD, 2018).

In Sweden, as in the rest of Europe, a 'transition machinery' has developed during the last 25 years that is intended to prevent and manage school failure and dropout, and facilitate young people's transition to the labour market (Brunila et al., 2011; Kurki & Brunila, 2014; Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014; OECD, 2016. Also see Chapter 7 in this book). However, the unusually far-reaching decentralization and marketization of education, and disappearance of many 'entry-level jobs' in Sweden have probably increased the difficulty of transitions. Young people now have to navigate through bewildering jungles of schools and educational choices (Lidström, Holm & Lundström, 2014), and the local variations in provisions such as special needs education, career counselling and youth schemes are unreasonably large (Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework applied here rests on careership theory, which is highly valuable for analysis and elucidation of individuals' career decisions in an agency-structural perspective (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Hodkinson, 2008), and conceptual formulations of 'otherness' (Hall, 1994; Anthias, 2002; Balibar, 2004; Trondman, 2007). Drawing on concepts formulated by Pierre Bourdieu, particularly field, habitus and capital, careership theory recognizes that young people commonly have fewer resources than other actors when proceeding through education and work. The basic careership model has the

following main components: the horizon of action, the field, turning points and routines. The *horizon of action* denotes what an individual considers to be desirable and possible, based on her/his habitus as well as structural opportunities. Within their horizons of action, people are held to make *pragmatic-rational choices* rather than technical-rational ones. The field is the environment in which career choices and transitions from school to work take place, and various actors with different amounts of *capital* strive to achieve their goals. Life careers consist of alternating *turning points* (when individuals make decisions and change paths, resulting in changes of their habitus) and *routines* (periods between turning points when people have a series of experiences and evaluate and deal with them). Turning points may be structural, self-initiated or imposed by others, while routines have varying degrees of alignment, with decisions taken at turning points and the decision maker's intentions. In a revised version of the theory, Hodkinson (2008) emphasizes the importance of learning as an integrated and central part of people's progressive career construction. Furthermore, there is less distinction between routines and turning points; careers are regarded as being constructed and developed gradually during the individual's positioning in various career-related fields. Moreover, the career construction process may be largely described in terms of learning, and as both embodied and social.

Drawing on Said (1978), the concept of otherness helps making visible the mechanisms that create dichotomies, 'us and them', and how knowledge of 'the other' is produced as something outside of the discourse of (Western) normality, where ethnicity or cultural identity are seen as essential (Hall, 1994). Not belonging to the majority, being an immigrant often means being constructed as subordinate and a social problem. Using otherness as a tool to study the exercise of power, beyond and behind the use of ethnicity, culture and gender in interaction with social class, helps efforts to understand how inequality arises (Balibar, 2004). The construction of 'immigrantness' as a social problem can be seen as a practice of thinking, as a grammar, upheld by historical and contemporary public narratives of the other as something worrying and troublesome. The structural categorization of immigrants as the others is experienced at individual level by those exposed to this construction, and who have to deal with the consequences as personal dilemmas (Trondman, 2007). How young people see themselves, and with what and whom they identify, can be analysed using their narratives, i.e. recorded stories about the social fields in which they live and how they relate to assigned collective identities as 'us (native)' or 'them (immigrant)' (Anthias, 2002).

Design

This chapter is based on data obtained in a research project, 'Unsafe Transitions', in which *inter alia* career narratives of 100 young Swedes in their early

twenties (mean age: 21.5 years) who left school without complete upper secondary qualifications were analysed. It should be stressed that they probably constitute a positively biased sample as they were mainly recruited via career counsellors and thus only included people known to the authorities. Nineteen former students from special upper secondary schools were included, as students with this background tend to encounter similar transition problems to the rest of the group: their grades are not fully recognized either in the labour market or in further education. This chapter primarily considers careers through and after school of 27 of the 100 respondents (14 males, 13 females), all of them first- or second-generation migrants, but they are also compared and contrasted to careers of the young people in the larger group.

   The analysis rests on the young people's own narratives of their life-journeys, as expressed in in-depth interviews. In 15 cases (nine males, six females),[3] it was possible to conduct a second follow-up interview a year later, but here we concentrate on the first set of interviews. The narratives are seen as expressions of the young people's experiences and understanding of their social reality, at the time of the interviews, and how they identified, constructed and positioned themselves in relation to the outside world. With this as a starting point, the young people's life stories allow investigation of the connections and relationships between the individual narratives and social context shaping their careers (Kohler Riessman, 2008; Somers & Gibson, 1994).

Career narratives of the young adults

The group of 27 young adults was heterogeneous in several ways. The parents of 18 of the young people originated from a Middle East country (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon or Palestine). Almost a third came from other parts of the world; three were born in other parts of Asia, four in Europe and two in north-eastern Africa. Almost all of the parents were refugees. With a few exceptions, the parents' educational levels were low, and they had subordinate positions in the labour market, although most of the respondents' fathers had gainful employment or ran small businesses. A large proportion of the mothers stayed at home and took care of the (often large) families. Thus, most of the young people had limited access to economic, cultural and social capital (Behtoui, 2004, 2013), which is a significant factor for young people's school achievement according to various previous researchers (e.g. Rumberger & Lim, 2008; McGrath, 2009; Dale, 2010; Grönqvist & Niknami, 2017). The involuntary migrations of their families also presumably reduced their social and economic capital. Their families were highly important to the young people, most of whom lived with their parents at the time of the first interview. Statements about the family like 'always number one', 'without the family you have nothing' and 'the family is the first priority' were recurrent. Bilal reflected on the centrality of the family as follows:

> Friends will come and go: colleagues will come and go, jobs will come
> and go. Family members are the only ones that will be there all your
> life. (Bilal)

The school years

All 27 young adults had incomplete secondary education, but there was substantial variation in the shortcomings preventing their receipt of a certificate of completion when they left school. Sixteen of them had attended Swedish education from grade 1 of primary school and on and therefore had more favourable initial education conditions than the other respondents had.

The scarcity of various kinds of capital affected the young people's relations to the educational field in several ways. One was that the parents had difficulties helping their children because of their lack of fluency in Swedish and often limited education.

> Nothing, they don't even know what the social science program is. If I had
> said natural science program, then she would have said: 'What do you
> become? Ah, a physician' … then she would have said 'Take that'. (Tara)

Sabrine felt a strong responsibility to show her parents that they made the right decision to leave everything in order to give the children a better future in a new country. In retrospect, she is glad of their support, particularly from her mother. However, the wish of the parents that she should attend the natural science programme did not turn out to be the best choice.

None of the young adults had memories of getting any substantial help from a career counsellor when choosing an upper secondary programme, even though schools are required to provide such support. Here one may add that careers education as a complement to individual and group counselling is not an explicit part of the Swedish curriculum, as is it is (for example) in Finland, Norway and Denmark.

Most of the young people also had to position themselves in relation to categorization as 'immigrants'. Some of them described how the difference making manifested as discrimination or even racism from teachers and other staff in upper secondary school, which resulted in dropout or change of school. In contrast, many teachers at compulsory level did not construe them as immigrants or regard 'immigrantness' as a social problem. Instead, they considered the individual student's needs and preconditions, in line with educational legislation more generally. For example, Zemar spoke warmly and at length about a teacher in the preparation class he was placed in as a newly arrived seven-year old child:

> I've never have had any teacher like her. She helped me with everything
> in school, I learnt Swedish from her. … She liked me a hell of a lot, and

> I liked her a hell of a lot. She was a terrific teacher, the best I have ever had. … I will never forget her. (Zemar)

In upper secondary school the study problems accumulated, while support from school decreased. The provision of special education and other support in school was particularly scarce and insufficient at upper secondary level, where there were higher expectations for students to be self-motivated and autonomous. For example, Amir did not realize the importance of studying: 'So I didn't take it seriously, I just went there. … Also, I didn't have a clear goal in mind.' Nobody in school talked with him about this. 'No one told me that if you get so many credit points you can make it to that [programme], it is good if you try hard—nobody, nobody said anything.' Playing football was a source of joy when the studies went badly. Amir attended the first and second grades in upper secondary school twice, and skipped classes quite often. He left upper secondary school after five years without complete grades.

Several of the young people worked during their studies to contribute to the family finances, which adversely affected their presence in school and time for homework.

> I remember not being able to attend the religion class because it clashed with my working hours at the job. I was afraid to tell the teacher, you know, so I said nothing. So I got a Fail in religion and in Swedish A. Swedish A started directly after the religion class. Sometimes I could make it, but I was late so I just got scolded every time I was there. They never understood my story. (Aras)

For some of the young women, school was a space of freedom from parental control, a possibility to get experiences that were not allowed at home.

> And … if you want to do things, and it doesn't have to be about seeing guys. It may just be about doing something fun. Then you do it during school hours. Then it is in school and nobody knows, you know what I mean? … Yes, from grade seven to upper secondary school, I can tell you it was the best time of our lives. (Hawa)

Collaboration and communication between school and the family generally seem to have been insufficient or non-existent, in cases of high truancy in compulsory school and, more frequently, upper secondary school. Schools seem to have failed in several respects to cooperate with the parents to increase the young people's possibilities to succeed in school and make well-founded education and future work choices. Consequently, most of them had a lonely journey through school, and most starkly through upper secondary school.

Entering the labour market: delayed turning points and limited agency

For our interviewees, leaving upper secondary school appears to have been less of a clear turning point and more of a continued routine of uncertainty and dependence on the family for support. This was particularly true for the 11 young people who were not in employment, education or training (NEET), or alternated between temporary employment, youth schemes and unemployment (here called fragmented transitions) during the first two to three years after upper secondary school (Figure 4.2).

Ten of the young people were mainly working, mostly in service jobs they obtained through their families and families' social networks—commonly jobs that may be regarded as blind alleys with little advancement opportunities (Kim, 2013). Six young men and women had spent most of this period in adult education to acquire missing grades, and in some cases had taken shorter vocational training courses. The rest (eight males and three females) were in the 'NEET/fragmented group', so more females than males were working or improving their educational status (Figure 4.2).[4]

The first year was the most difficult for most of the school leavers. After this initial period most of the young adults made choices to improve their situation. Maryam wanted to work and earn money after leaving school, but found it difficult to get a job. Instead, she stayed with her family for a year, doing nothing
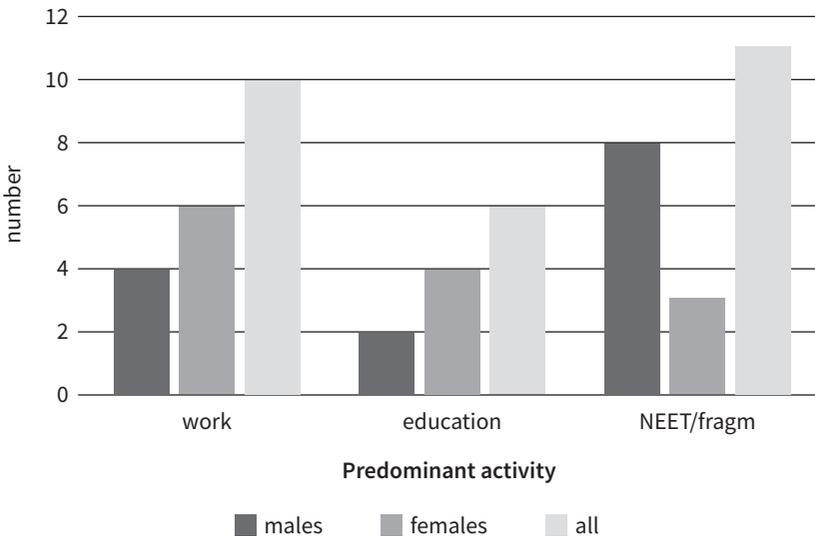
Figure 4.2: Predominant activities during the first two to three years after leaving school (n=27). Absolute numbers.
NEET and fragm refer to not in employment, education or training and fragmented transitions, respectively.

special. She got a temporary job at a restaurant via a friend, and later at a home for elderly people, with her mother's help. Maryam said that these jobs meant nothing to her. She began to sit at home again with no money of her own, losing self-confidence. 'Everything went downhill', she concluded. Following a suggestion from a friend, she applied for a job at the Post Office. She got the job and felt that life started to improve; she began to 'come out from this depression'.

Thus, failing upper secondary school resulted in transitions between jobs and education, but to varying degrees, corroborating research that points to the need to recognize limitations in agency and blurring of routine periods and turning points (Evans, 2007; Hodkinson, 2008). However, the young people commonly regarded themselves as the architects of their lives. For example, Rezan, who stayed at home doing nothing for one year after leaving upper secondary school, emphasized the importance of his own agency for a successful career:

> Hard times give motivation. … Exactly. Yes it was like that. At least you have to do something. No-one's going to come to you and say, 'Here, can you take this job, please?' Everything is about yourself. You have to do it on your own, like. (Rezan)

For those who initially experienced unemployment, interspersed with shorter periods of employment and youth schemes, the routine of failing seems to have continued after school years. The young people who worked generally had rather unskilled jobs in the service sector, although some were assigned tasks that were more demanding. The young men and women in the first set regarded their jobs as a means to get temporary economic support and had plans for the future that included getting an education, sometimes combined with moving to other places. For the whole group, starting and finishing some form of adult education was recognized as an important turning point. Three years after their upper secondary school period,[5] more than half of the group had used adult education, of varying duration, as a stepping stone to the future.

Otherness

The young men and women described themselves as being talked about and treated as 'immigrants', a characterization that they had to relate to actively, even if they had been born in Sweden and lived there all their lives. It was a part of the routine periods of their lives and everyday learning on their social position that affected habitus and horizons of action. The structural form of difference making was most obvious in school, and most virulently expressed in forms of discrimination and racism, resulting in some cases in dropout or change of school. One of the young men, Bilal, described having to discuss, almost daily, what other people defined as 'immigrant problems'. He had been affected, he

said, by discrimination and generalization because of his non-Swedish looks, although he did not regard himself as an immigrant but as a Swede who had been born and grew up in Sweden.

Tesfay, who had been born in East Africa, had experienced outright racism because of his skin colour. Therefore, he did not want his children to grow up in Sweden, which he characterized as a racist country, but planned to move elsewhere to get a job before having any children. Sirwe perceived the city where she lived as racist, and compared it to another city in the same region that she believed was far more open-minded; for example, youths with a foreign background were more commonly employed there.

The young people's social spaces were reflected in their geographical locations.[6] Places where the young people lived and went to school were characterized by absence of 'the Swedish'—Swedish neighbours, Swedish classmates and the Swedish language. The young adults also argued that it would probably have been far easier to get entrance to Swedish society if they had lived in a city area with more Swedish inhabitants. Their narratives reflect increasing segregation of the housing market in Sweden. Living in poor-quality, stigmatized and/or publicly subsidized 'housing projects' or 'sink estates', as most of the young interviewees did, exacerbates feelings of otherness, particularly for inhabitants of non-European origin. This coincides with accumulated poverty, low employment and income levels, low proportions of young people who are eligible for upper secondary school, and remoteness from places of power and influence.

Pragmatic choices—changes in habitus and horizons of action

The young people's careers had been constructed and developed in fields where they had subordinated positions, based on their families' mostly limited social, economic and cultural capital, their own short education and limited experience, and the otherness they encountered. Against this background, their educational and labour market career choices may be understood as pragmatic-rational, enabled and limited by the resulting horizons of action. All their narratives reflect development of their horizons of action from the time they left school, and pragmatic-rational decision-making that changed their positions. Nevertheless, the choices were often constrained by heavy restrictions of actorship and opportunities due to their school failure and relatively scarce resources. Clearly, what happens in school and later in the labour market strongly affects the horizons of action of young people such as our interviewees. The learning and interaction that occurs within the routine periods are both crucial for understanding the process that results in school failure and the subsequent, extended period of establishment in working and adult life. Focusing on learning, regardless of whether it is learning to fail or improving positions in the field, enables elucidation of changes in horizons of action and habitus.

Comparing the careers of the young women with those of the male respondents adds further complexity. A larger proportion of the young women than the young men in our study had been working and/or attended education during the first years after leaving school; fewer of the women had experienced a period of NEET or oscillation between unemployment, youth schemes and brief jobs (Figure 4.2). However, many of the young women had even more restricted space for autonomous action than the young men, which limited their future opportunities. During the school years they were, for example, often expected to take care of younger siblings and help with other domestic tasks. Maryam's experience is quite typical in this respect:

> Yes, but it turned out like that because I'm the oldest. And mum and dad, yes dad's working all the time so I have to help mum. Pretty much with cooking, cleaning and helping with homework. Check where everyone is, and training times and such. (Maryam)

Some of the young women also described their parents as being reluctant to allow them to move to another city for further or higher education, or even being actively opposed to the idea.

To summarize, the narratives of the young people show that school failures, intermittent attendance and dropout[7] are complex and extended processes that are influenced by education, family, and access to power and capital. The young people also encounter difference making through the predominant images and discourses of 'immigrantness' as a social problem and by being located in specific socio-geographic places that delimited their horizons of action.

The family is highly significant and, in most cases, provides security and continuity. The family's present and future situations are crucial elements of young adults' habitus and identity, which also affects their choices. Hence, their individual horizons of action are strongly influenced by their families' opportunities and horizons of action, indicating a need to recognize *collectively enabling and limiting horizons of action* rather than just individual ones.

Some comparisons with the larger group of non-completers

The school years

A comparison of the group of young people with a migration background and the larger group of 100 respondents revealed common denominators as well as several interesting and somewhat unexpected differences. The 100 young adults described a downward spiral of negative experiences during their school years that reduced their self-confidence and motivation (see also Lundahl et al., 2017). According to their narratives, most of them felt that schooling had been quite successful and largely met their needs until they reached the last

years of compulsory school. In most cases the students stayed in upper secondary school for three or more years but failed to varying extents. This appears to have been at least partly related to the fact that support from school and teachers' commitment to individual students increasingly declines as students progress through the current Swedish education system; in upper secondary school students are expected to be able to be independent and self-disciplined. Another recurrently mentioned aspect of their schooling is being treated as different, by both peers and teachers; subordination and powerlessness are prominent aspects in their narratives. However, the young people did not generally perceive themselves as victims or blame non-completion on this. Rather, they commonly related their failure to their own shortcomings, for example laziness and lack of motivation and seriousness.

Career patterns after upper secondary school

For many of the 100 non-completers, leaving upper secondary education was not the positive turning point that they had hoped. At the age of 21–22 years, more than half of them (54%) had spent the last two to three years in a fragmented ('yo-yo') transition pattern or as NEETs. A third (33%) had work as the main activity after leaving school, and only 13% had mainly attended education. It is notable that a considerably higher proportion of the 27 young people of migrant background had either been employed and/or studying than of the respondents with Swedish-born parents (Table 4.1).

Several factors may have contributed to the finding that the proportion of NEETs was lower among non-completers of migrant background than among those with a Swedish background. One is that parents of many of those of Swedish origin were divorced and/or had problems of unemployment, illness and substance abuse. Accordingly, the lives of these youths had been frequently disrupted by break-ups and moves. In contrast, families of most of the young people with a migration background were intact, and they did not describe their parents as having personal problems or being heavily hit by unemployment.

Table 4.1: Predominant activities after leaving school at the age of 21–22 years (%).

Respondent category	Predominant activity			
	work	education	fragmented or NEET	Total
All (N=100)	33	13	54	100
With Swedish-born parents	31	10	59	100
With non-Swedish-born parents	37	22	41	100

Shorter USE < 2 years	Work	Education	NEET/Fragm

Shorter USE
< 2 years
34 (21 m, 13 f)
23 (14 m, 9 f)
11 (7 m, 4 f)

Work
7 (6 m, 1 f)
5 (4 m, 1 f)
2 (2 m)

Education
3 (3 f)
1 (1 f)
2 (2 f)

NEET/Fragm
24 (15 m, 9 f)
17 (10 m, 7 f)
7 (5 m, 2 f)

Longer USE
≥ 2 years
66 (29 m, 37 f)
50 (22 m, 28 f)
16 (7m , 9 f)

Work
26 (10 m, 16 f)
18 (8 m, 10 f)
8 (2 m, 6 f

Education
10 (4 m, 6 f)
6 (2 m, 4 f)
4 (2 m, 2 f)

NEET/Fragm
30 (15 m, 15 f)
26 (12 m, 14 f)
4 (3 m, 1 f)
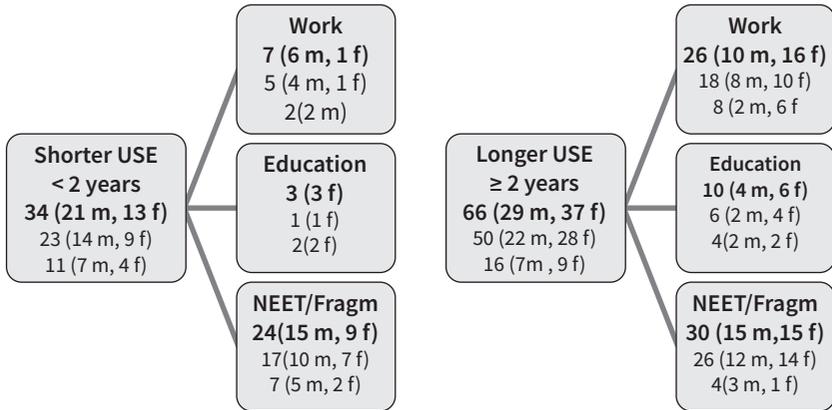
Figure 4.3: Career patterns: time in upper secondary education (USE) and predominant activities after school for all respondents (N=100, in bold), respondents with Swedish-born parents (n1=73) and respondents with non-Swedish background (n2=27, *in italics*).

NEET and fragm refer to not in employment, education or training and fragmented transitions, respectively.

Moreover, many of the last-mentioned respondents had extensive networks of family and relatives in their neighbourhood, and they had rarely moved during their school years, excluding the migration from another country. However, the young women in the migrant group in general enjoyed less freedom than the daughters of Swedish-born parents did; they had more domestic duties and more restrictions than the Swedish young women had. Compensating for this by using school as a 'free zone' sometimes impaired their studies.

Many respondents in the larger group also reported that they had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia or similar disabilities that were diagnosed very late, sometimes after 12 years in school. In other cases, learning and concentration difficulties were discovered early, but the young people characterized the school's efforts to treat and compensate for such difficulties as insufficient or non-existent. Consequently, their self-confidence decreased, and they perceived themselves as failures in school. They felt treated as different, both by peers and teachers. In contrast, very few of the young people with a migration background spoke about disability, learning difficulties or bullying as the major problem, but instead often related to their immigrant background when they described being treated as different.

The career patterns after upper secondary school also depended on *the time spent in upper secondary education* (Figure 4.3). If we look at the whole group of 100 young adults, a higher proportion of those who spent less than two years in upper secondary education were in the NEET/fragmented category two to

three years after leaving school. Thus, spending at least two years in upper secondary education apparently decreased risks of being in this category, probably at least partly because time in upper secondary education is correlated with chances to get more passes, and filling gaps in subjects or grades, often parallel to gainful work.

Those with a migration background had similar career patterns to each other, or to other groups. However, to a greater extent than other youth in the study, they succeeded in getting jobs even at an early stage—but often ones that risked becoming dead-end jobs. An important contributory factor seems to be that they had already worked during the school years, mainly in service jobs they obtained through their families' social networks (Lindblad, 2016).

Conclusions and discussion

In line with previous research, the study shows that school-to-work transitions are clearly extended, complex and insecure processes for young people without at least upper secondary qualifications (Dale, 2010; Lindberg, 2012, 2014; Settersten & Ray, 2010; Stokes & Wyn, 2007). Our findings further indicate that the length of time spent in upper secondary education affects career patterns and time required for establishment in the labour market, as well as the opportunities available to young people (despite exceptions enabled by individual agency and support, informal and/or institutional).

The 27 young adults' narratives portrayed two different, rather evenly distributed transition patterns. Almost half of them obtained employment directly, often in unskilled service jobs that they had already tried to help their families financially while attending school. However, this was also one of the reasons for failing in school. The other half entered a fragmented transition pattern, spending most of their time unemployed or in youth schemes, with limited choice alternatives and agency (see Evans, 2007). Nevertheless, the narratives also suggest that young adults' careers gradually developed, and their horizons of action expanded. They learned from their efforts to establish themselves in the labour market and their participation in the field. They realized that they wanted and needed to change their position in the labour market, which often prompted them to participate in some kind of education (Hodkinson, 2008). Other important factors promoting changes included informal and institutional support, the family (which strongly influenced, positively or negatively, young people's education and work choices) and associated social networks.

When the 27 young people considered options, structural conditions and individual agency interactively dictated what was regarded as possible and impossible. Social class and ethnicity closely intertwined in their positioning in the socio-geographic space and the difference making they encountered. Gender may also be an important factor, as shown by our finding that the young women had less space for autonomous action than the young men. However,

our findings also indicate that, when individual agency was limited, most obviously after failing in school, opportunities for enhancing agency and successful transitions could still emerge, especially if institutional support was available. Access to flexible adult education and other institutional services, e.g. targeted and individually adapted youth schemes and employment support, are thus highly important to avoid 'locking in' low-educated youth in low-status jobs or unemployment. This crucial aspect of careership has however received relatively little research attention, especially in Swedish contexts.

Discussion

As is evident from a host of research (see above), structural conditions, such as availability (or lack thereof) of well-developed and equal services in school, e.g. special education and career counselling, second-chance education, and decent jobs at the labour market for young school leavers, are essential for positive school-to-work transitions. Here we want to point to some aspects that became visible in our study and indicate measures and approaches that may contribute to strengthen the agency of the young people concerned.

In the narratives of the 27 young men and women in our study, the family constitutes a centre of life, and the young adult has to consider its needs and demands. Thus, *collective* pragmatic-rational processes, rather than just individual ones, may sometimes be involved in career-related decision-making. It may be important to understand, not least for educational actors, that conditions, values and ideas about the world that significantly differ from expected or dominating discourses may influence young people's thoughts about what is desirable and possible to do in the future. The young people's choice to work parallel to school studies is based on such deliberations that are products of a social and historical context. Hence, a better understanding of the life conditions of young people from families with a migration history, and improved relations between schools and parents, could empower students during their school years. In *career counselling*, such aspects are part of a multicultural approach, founded on insights that clients may have values and conceptions of the world that differ from the counsellor's in significant respects, which affect clients' thoughts about choice: what exists, what is possible and what is impossible (Chen, 2008; Sue & Sue, 2008). Applying such an approach in schools and other institutions that deal with young people is essential, *inter alia*, treating other's 'life space' respectfully, with interest and questions, in order to understand their conditions and thus facilitate improvements in their position and development (Peavy, 1997).

Furthermore, increasing *teachers' and heads'* insights into the life conditions of students with migrant backgrounds could be highly beneficial. For instance, there appears to be too little awareness of parents' lack of knowledge about the educational system and language problems, the students' difficulties in getting

help and a quiet place for doing homework, and their need to contribute to the family's finances by working. Dissemination of such knowledge is essential for the introduction of effective new solutions, e.g. coaching to improve structural factors and encouragement, and help with homework in school, to prevent dropout and low or incomplete grades. In addition, organized instruction about educational and vocational options may be essential for preparing students to take rational, informed choices for the future, particularly in cases where parents have little relevant knowledge. This is relevant for many students generally, not just those with migrant backgrounds. Our overall conclusion is that prevention of school failure for many of the 27 young adults in this study would not have required much investment in resources and efforts. That is good news.

Notes

[1] The chapter emanates from the research project 'Unsafe Transitions', funded by the Swedish Research Council (ref. no 2009-5964), and Lindblad (2016).

[2] Foreign born here refers to being born in a country outside of the EU 28.

[3] The falling-off had several causes, only some of which were known, e.g. movement to another country or illness. In other cases, the respondents could not be reached, because either they did not answer at all or contact details were missing (sometimes because of movement to another country). In some cases, the young adults agreed to participate but repeatedly postponed the follow-up interview.

[4] However, it is possible that we failed to recruit young women for our study who continued to assist their families with childcare and other domestic work after failing to find a job in the labour market. For example, more female than male non-native-born Swedes aged 15–24 were in the NEET category between 2009 and 2017 (except in 2011) according to Statistics Sweden (2018).

[5] Students 'normally' finish upper secondary education at the age of 19, but many continue for a fourth year, e.g. due to a change of programme or attending special upper secondary school. At the age of 20, youth education ends, and young adults who want to complete compulsory and/or upper secondary education are referred to adult education.

[6] The increasing housing segregation and its connection to ethnicity in Sweden have been reported and analysed by several authors, e.g. Bunar and Sernhede (2013), Molina (2005) and Szulkin and Jonsson (2007).

[7] Our study of 100 young adults shows that 'dropout' is often a misleading concept; most of the respondents attended upper secondary school for three years or longer, but often with high rates of truancy, and without reaching the goals and or leaving with a pass in all subjects.

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'Learn Skills and Get Employed'

Constituting the Employable Refugee Subjectivity through Integration Policies and Training Practices

Ameera Masoud, Tuuli Kurki and Kristiina Brunila

Who cares in the end? Because the most important aspect in integration, is that [refugees] could find a job? So if eventually they find a job, no one cares what they went through, or what potentials were lost, because they found a job! It is definitely sad. (Teacher of integration programme, 2017)

The context of this chapter is Finland, where, according to the Finnish Integration Act (2010), refugees' integration into society is successful when they have managed to become employable (see FMEC, 2016). Employability as an indicator of refugees' successful integration into society is also common in other European Union member states (Bucken-Knapp, Fakih & Spehar, 2018; Vesterberg, 2016; EC, 2016). Employability is part of the 'transition machinery' for refugees as well, to put on the move in very specific ways, to manage and govern. Therefore, participating in integration training to learn new skills and a profession is part of the

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integration plan for refugees that claims to expedite their labour market entry (MEAE, 2016; FMEC, 2016). Integration programmes also promise that becoming employable is only possible by learning new skills, by rehabilitating old skills, by enhancing competencies, and through vocational studies (FNBE, 2012). In the pursuit of making refugees employable, numerous educational interventions and projects have been developed, each promising that it will expedite refugees' entry into the labour market. Consequently, integration training is becoming part of the wider changes taking place in the welfare state, which has allowed for market-oriented interventions towards maintaining competitiveness, through enhancing skills and competences (Kurki et al., 2018; Brunila et al., 2017; Kärkkäinen, 2017; Svensson, 2004). Despite these numerous educational interventions, previous research has highlighted how refugees face difficulty finding jobs in Finland, and that their previous skills and qualifications are not valued, which could be due to various political, social and cultural barriers (OECD, 2018; Kurki et al., 2018; EC, 2017; Yijälä & Nyman, 2017; Larja et al., 2012; Forsander, 2008; Ahmad, 2005). For instance, in the EU report on Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, Finland was found to be one of the most discriminatory countries among the 28 EU Member States (FRA, 2017).

In this chapter, we examine the employability discourse in integration policies and training practices, especially in terms of constructing a specific type of employable refugee subjectivity. What is problematic is the fact that it is not clear what constitutes the right set of skills and competences to become employable (Shan & Fejes, 2015; see also Chapter 4). Therefore, we are interested in how an employability discourse works in constructing 'employable refugee subjectivity' in Finnish integration policies and training practices, where the entry to the labour market remains a challenge for refugees. Employability, which is influenced by particular government policies that aim to produce employable individuals, requires a continuously 'productive' self (Moore, 2010). Hence, we ask how people categorized as refugees constitute their subjectivities and are being constituted within these integration policies and practices. This chapter seeks to contribute to the current debate on the integration of refugees in Finland, through highlighting what happens to them when employment is the key element of successful integration, and what this integration process entails.

Integration policies and training practices in Finland

Finland's quite short history with refugees has led to integration challenges, mainly concerning their labour market entry (OECD, 2017, 2018). In Finland, integration training is implemented based on the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration, which was reformed in 2010. The reform widened the scope of integration training to include all immigrants—including asylum seekers and refugees—who have permanent permission to stay in Finland. Officially, integration training is voluntary and consists of labour market training and self-motivated training (FMEC, 2016). In order to be qualified to participate

in integration training, one has to register as an unemployed jobseeker in the Employment and Economic Development Office. This registration should not be made later than three years after the issue of the first residence permit. In order to receive unemployment benefits, refugees are obliged to participate in integration training and adhere to the personal integration plan (TE, 2013).

The first step to start integration training is a meeting with an employment officer. In the meeting, the personal integration plan should be drawn up based on the individual's educational background and interests (Finnish Integration Act 2010). The plan may include, for instance, language courses, vocational training, enhancing skills and competences, work practice and/or career guidance.

Integration training is provided by various educational institutions (FMEC, 2016). Since municipalities have the autonomy to execute integration training in cooperation with different actors, including the private sector (see SITRA, 2016), they can have different kinds of integration programmes funded by the city or the Ministry of Education and Culture or the Ministry of Employment and Economy (which receives funding from the EU) (see Saukkonen, 2017; also Kurki et al., 2018).

Officially, the Finnish integration policy is based on the idea of inclusive democracy, equality, and an individualized integration plan, which makes refugees' integration appear to be smooth (FMEE, 2016; MIPEX, 2015; Finnish Integration Act 2010; Saukkonen, 2017; Pöyhönen & Tarnanen, 2015). Previous research reminds us that the welfare system, with its claimed inclusive mechanisms, has not fully embraced refugees in the labour market and higher education (Martikainen, Valtonen & Wahlbeck, 2012; Blomberg et al., 2008). Apparently, what is missing is knowledge of how the Finnish integration policy 'works in practice' (Saukkonen, 2017; see also OECD, 2018, p. 144).

While the broad objective of integration training is to increase refugees' participation in all aspects of society, the main focus is on enhancing refugees' participation in the labour market. Thus, unless refugees gain employment, integration is considered unsuccessful (MEAE, 2016; FMEE, 2012; Saukkonen, 2017; Pöyhönen & Tarnanen, 2015). Employment is a pressing issue in the welfare state policies (Martikainen, Valtonen & Wahlbeck, 2012), as well as for refugees, where employment means the ability to integrate and have a better life (Forsander, 2008). Nevertheless, putting the emphasis on employment as a successful measure of refugees' integration has consequences for integration policies and training practices (Wahlbeck, 2007), and shapes refugees' subjectivities, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

Finnish migration policies highlight the importance of attracting skilled workers who are third-country nationals in order to sustain competitiveness (FMI, 2018; Finnish Government, 2015, 2016). It is worth noting that refugees have an unrestricted right to work in Finland, once they have received their residence permit (EMN, 2015). This is contrary to the current reality of refugees, who face discrimination in entering the labour market and challenges in getting their skills and qualifications recognized (EC, 2017). Even before the

so-called 'refugee crisis', Ala-Kauhaluoma and Härkäpää (2006) showed that 'employers displayed a preference for hiring a white Finnish young person without vocational training or a long-term unemployed person rather than someone from an immigrant background' (Larja et al., 2012, p. 60). As a result, refugees remain in a 'state of limbo' (Yijälä & Nyman, 2017) and in prolonged integration training (EMN, 2015). The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2016), on the other hand, claims that integration training will support and preserve the previous professional experience of individuals. Nevertheless, the skills and knowledge that refugees possess have not been effectively utilized in the Finnish labour market (MEAE, 2016; OECD, 2018), and the FMEC (2016) acknowledges that 'the immigrants' routes to education and working life are long and contain idling, overlapping and also sometimes inappropriate studies' (p. 25). The Ministry also indicates that training is based on 'what training is available, not based on what the person's actual educational needs are and what the appropriate training would be, considering their competence and educational background' (ibid.). Even when refugees succeed in becoming employed, they continue to have poor financial outcomes or work in temporary low-skilled jobs (OECD, 2017; Näre, 2013; Könönen, 2011). The unemployment rate among immigrants in Finland remains high (OECD, 2016), but among refugees it is even higher (OECD, 2018; Martikainen, Valtonen & Wahlbeck, 2012).

Employability discourse as a policy imperative for integration

EU policies concerning the integration of refugees as well as previous research indicate that learning to become employable is a way to promote inclusion of refugees, and maintain the global competitiveness of the state (EC, 2015, 2016; Dahlstedt, 2009; Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004). The concept of employability is seen to be beneficial, especially concerning groups who are considered vulnerable, such as refugees (Dahlstedt, 2009). However, the un/employability of refugees is, in most cases, determined by employment policies and the integration system (Williams, 2009). Previous studies define the notion of employability in educational training and labour market policies as the individual's ability to become employed, making the individual herself responsible for becoming employable (Fejes, 2010; Moore, 2010; Fejes & Berglund, 2010; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005; Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004; Brunila & Siivonen, 2016). Consequently, employability as an integration tool demands a wide set of skills that must be developed, resulting in increased pressure on the individual to continuously develop herself, in accordance with unclear demands (see Moore, 2010; Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004). Employability in that sense becomes politicized and a 'one-size-fits all safety net' (Moore, 2010), which attempts to redefine the individual, offering a new subjecthood (Fejes, 2010). This has caused a shift from knowledge (what refugees know and could bring to society) to adopting new skills—a shift that could waste potentials (see Moore, 2010; Guo, 2010; Olssen, 2006).

In measures concerning refugees' integration into the labour market, employability is increasingly being attributed to the ability to learn to increase individual's potential and form new 'employability' skills, which shape the subjectivity of the individual (see Williams, 2005; also Williams, 2009). In the knowledge-based society 'competence and skill are seen as perishable goods' (Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004, p. 1). Skills, in this case, are not necessarily associated with specific job-related duties but comprise a more generic set of skills (Moore, 2010; Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004). These skills are related to the individual's ability for 'self-management' (Moore, 2010; see also Rose, 1996), and to constantly train and retrain the self to be able to change (Walkerdine, 2006). Allan Williams (2009) indicates that 'employability is also about learning and the social recognition of migrants' knowledge' (p. 24). He also questions whether managing to find a job should be considered a 'stepping stone' in refugees' labour market entry. Nevertheless, he posits that learning should not only be associated with the refugee's individual knowledge but should also be visible on a structural level such as integration systems, employment policies and addressing discrimination (Williams, 2009; see also Kroll et al., 2008).

Previous research on refugees' integration through employment in EU countries has not focused enough on the integration process from the refugee's point of view (Bucken-Knapp, Fakih & Spehar, 2018). Thus, we aim to address this gap by highlighting how integration policies and training practices in Finland shape and construct refugees' subjectivities, where the main aim is to make refugees employable. The process towards becoming employable, as an integration end, is regulatory as well as enabling, as it makes and remakes the individual according to the 'characteristics of the discursive field of employability' (Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004). Power 'works through, and not against, subjectivity' (Rose, 1996, p. 151). Hence, employability as a form of discursive power is not only suppressive but also produces and shapes subjects (see Butler, 1997a). Power in Foucault's terms is understood as multidimensional and reciprocal, constituting and reconstituting subjectivities in certain discursive practices (Foucault, 1995). In this chapter, integration policies and practices create possibilities for certain subjectivities, through giving the impression that the subject has the choice (see Kurki et al., 2018; Brunila & Siivonen, 2016; Davies et al., 2001). In the neoliberal ethos, the ideal employable subjectivity is entrepreneurial (Mononen-Batista & Brunila, 2016), autonomous, yet controlled by an integration system which demands constant working and reworking of the self (see Brunila & Siivonen, 2016; O'Flynn & Petersen, 2007; Davies, 2006; Rose, 1996).

Data and method

This chapter is based on Ameera Masoud's PhD study on integration policies and practices for refugees in Finland, with the research conducted as part of an ongoing research project: 'CoSupport—Interrupting Youth Support Systems in the Ethos of Vulnerability', funded by the Academy of Finland and led by

Kristiina Brunila. Throughout the studies of the project, we have shown how education and training are becoming geared towards skills training rather than knowledge-based education, creating the ideal individual who needs to be self-motivated and self-disciplined (see Brunila et al., 2019). Masoud produced ethnographic data during 2017–2018 in vocational integration programmes for immigrants, provided by two different educational institutions in southern Finland. The data were collected at several vocational programmes, such as practical nursing, childcare, construction and technical fields. These data include participant observations, interviews with 18 Arabic-speaking refugees (age 20–35) who had received their residence permits in Finland, two integration project managers and five teachers/trainers. Additionally, 14 EU-level and Finnish policy documents[1] in relation to integration practices and employability were analysed from the period 2010–2018 in order to understand the discourses that shape the policies and how 'truth' and 'knowledge' are produced as discourses in the texts and practices (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009).

The refugees interviewed were participating in integration training in two different institutions as part of their personal integration plans. Participants in the first institution had completed a Finnish language course (of about nine months) followed by one year of pre-vocational training. In order to be eligible for the current training, participants need to possess a B.1. (language skills of an independent user level of Finnish). The other institution has a new programme established as a response to the refugee inflow, the prolonged process of integration, and the financial cuts in integration training that claim to expedite labour market entry. Instead of attending the language course, the interviewees were placed in vocational schools to learn Finnish language skills alongside other skills and a profession. In this second programme there were no language skill requirements. During the interviews, Masoud found out that some of the participants barely knew the basics of Finnish but were still participating in the programme. This created a considerable challenge for both the teacher and participants. Interviewees in both institutions were starting vocational education that lasts from two to three years and leads to a vocational degree. The studies in both programmes include a practical part and/or on-the-job training.

In this chapter, we utilize a Foucauldian-inspired discursive approach as an analytical tool (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014; Foucault, 1972). We understand discursive practices as multiple processes that construct, alter and locate subjects into certain processes, producing meanings, subjectivities and discourses in each setting. Foucault refers to discursive practices as how knowledge is formed and produced, and what kind of reality and consequences discursive practices entail (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014). Accordingly, we study integration policies and discursive practices related to employability in terms of discursive power, by acknowledging the relation of knowledge, discourse and power as productive and regulative (see Foucault, 1980, 1995). Furthermore, we focus on an employable refugee subjectivity and the ways in which it is shaped by integration policies and training practices, and power relations that influence

and produce subjectivities (see Mertanen & Brunila, 2018; Brunila & Siivonen, 2016; see also Kurki et al., 2018). Hence, following the work of Judith Butler (1993, 1997b), Bronwyn Davies (2006) and Deborah Youdell (2006) related to how discursive practices constitute subjectivities, our analysis will explore how refugees engage in the ambivalent process of the simultaneous submission to and mastery of the employable subjectivity, what subjectivities are produced and also challenged, and what effects this has on the construction of their subjectivities. In our analysis we will focus on discursive regularities: how refugees discursively start to understand and construct themselves as employable subjects, and how they are constructed by integration policies and professionals. We will also explore the possibility of speaking and acting, as well as the ambivalent process of submitting to and mastering the employable subjectivity, and what consequences these discursive processes entail for the integration of refugees.

   The chapter has the following structure: in the first part of our analysis, we analyse integration policies and interviews with project managers as well as integration professionals to demonstrate how refugees' subjectivities are constructed within the integration discursive setting. This will allow us to grasp in what ways refugees are being constituted through integration policies and training practices which aim towards creating the employable subject. The second part of our analysis focuses on how integration participants themselves constitute their subjectivities, which enables us to analyse what kinds of consequences this integration process has on the subjects involved.

The making of 'employable' refugee subjectivity

According to our analysis of the policy documents, the making of employable refugee subjectivity takes place through adopting specific predetermined skills, which is a common aim in integration policies and training practices in Finland. These skills do not only include language skills, for 'skilling' takes a broader dimension that requires the individual to change. In this case, change means that the individual has to be able to continuously accept a new subjectivity that requires a ceaseless skilling process, as the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Integration Training for Adult Migrants states:

> One of the key objectives of integration training is to increase students' own initiative and learning-to-learn skills. Through learning to learn, students are helped to see and understand the effects of their own actions on learning. Students start to pay active attention to their own ways of learning and working and understand how these influence learning. … Learning is visible as a change in a learner's ways of thinking and operating. The change may mean a new skill or changing an old way of operating into a more meaningful or efficient one. (FNBE, 2012, p. 16)

In integration training, skills are often vaguely defined, using concepts such as 'learning to learn skills', 'life planning skills', 'everyday life skills', 'unlearning habitual ways of working', 'goal oriented', 'interactive' and the ability to set objectives (ibid.). The objective that participants have to focus on setting is the ability to adopt the aforementioned generic skills in order to find a job faster. Accordingly, in the above extract as a prerequisite for being employable, participants in integration training are expected to construct specific productive subjectivities throughout the integration process. For example, refugees are expected to acquire 'new skills' in order to live in accordance with the way Finnish society is considered to operate (see also FNBE, 2012, p. 10):

> Integration means that immigrants adapt themselves to the Finnish society and acquire new skills, competences and practices which help them actively participate in the life of their new home country. (FMI, 2015)

In this way, integration training becomes a tool towards preparing 'adult migrants for the operating methods of Finnish Society, a sustainable lifestyle and everyday life skills' as well as 'fixing' and 'correcting' (FNBE, 2012) the individual, through the assumption that refugees need to be reskilled in order to have an 'active' role. Accordingly, refugees are expected to 'review' and 'reform' their traditions and skills that are presupposed to be in conflict with their ability to integrate, and they should learn to live from the point of view of the new society (ibid., p. 10; see also Kärkkäinen, 2017). Preparing refugees to live the way Finnish society operates is vague and lacks concretization through integration policies and training, which assumes immediately the difference and lack of knowledge among refugees. This also entails that Finnish society is homogenous, and that refugees are not prepared to function in a society that promotes social justice and equality. Hence, refugees are construed as automatically unemployed, and their unemployment is mostly related to their lack of 'employability' skills (see Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004). Yet, even when refugees are identified as people who have skills, their inability to find a job demonstrates quite a paradoxical situation that refugees face during the integration process. The following two extracts demonstrate this:

> They have been working all their life and they do have knowledge and skills, but the context is now different for them, and their background is completely different. There is this total paradox, which our integration system makes them feel zero. At the same time, they have the skills that we can benefit from … that is why through our programmes we will help rebuild their skills … they need a lot of help, fixing and rehabilitation. (Integration training project manager, 2017)

> First, they have to study or do some training, because there is, of course, a big difference in their skills, culture, what they know, and the Finnish

> way of doing work. … They have to change if they want to find work or even work practice … and kind of accept anything, to show that they are willing to work. (Job coach, 2017)

In line with the aforementioned interviews is the excerpt given below from a trainer, who sees that it is important for refugees to demonstrate a certain subjectivity, namely to be active. This implies that the refugee has to adopt a subjectivity that devalues the self:

> I try to convince them that they should at least look at it from a different perspective [why they are in the integration training]. I always tell them you should start from somewhere, and accept anything, it would be good in your CV that you are active. You should keep thinking as if you are now working. (Job coach, 2017)

In our analysis of the above interview extracts, refugee subjectivity is constructed as a person who needs fixing. For instance, as in the above extract, to 'accept anything' offered by the integration system becomes part of refugees' 'learning to learn' to become active. Becoming 'active' indicates that refugees are doing something right for their own integration. This was demonstrated through the coach's reminder to integration participants that, regardless of what they are studying, integration training is good because it shows that they are active and willing to do anything. Integration professionals mentioned how important it is for refugees to 'fix' their attitudes and the way they behave, especially when they meet potential employers. They are unemployed mainly because they are not changing themselves and they are not active enough in seeking job opportunities, and finding creative ways of presenting themselves to employers. The assumption that they do not have skills or that their skills need continuous mending, and they do not know the Finnish way of doing work, tends to control their integration path rather than utilize their skills. This contrasts with what Finnish integration policies promise (see FMEC, 2016). As our interviews with integration professionals as well as the policy analysis have shown, the integration measures target the unemployed, which disregards other societal and political issues that are hampering refugees' unemployment. Previous research has argued how immigrants with various backgrounds in Finland are often perceived as 'unskilled' (Näre, 2013). A similar type of idea was also present in the interviews with project workers and trainers, where previous skills were disregarded, and refugees need to accept anything in order to show they are willing to work. If they do not demonstrate enough willingness, it means they are not active or skilful enough. Integration training promotes a conditioned subjectivity, which is that the individual has to master the ability to perform. This reminds us how the focus of integration training tends to be oriented towards 'changing selves' (see Williams, 2005). The extracts above also demonstrate how integration practices are affected by the wider global shift, which disregards the skills of those who are 'employable' and

ready to work, towards focusing on changing the (un)employable individuals' state of mind, through engaging them in constant education, re-education and training. In this way, individuals will supposedly be able to adjust to the changing demands of the labour market (Moore, 2010).

Within the policy documents analysed, refugee subjectivity becomes constructed as a learning subjectivity built within limited choices and with particular characteristics, as the following policy extract shows:

> Successful integration in Finnish society always starts from the individual and requires an active and responsible attitude on the part of the participant. Support provided by society may serve this individually oriented learning process, once it is ensured that the system provides incentives, is fair and works effectively. (MEAE, 2016, p. 15)

The above extract is indicative of certain subjectivities that must be replicated by the integration participant in order to be successfully integrated: having an active, responsible attitude, where the learning process is individually oriented. As a result, refugees have to become responsible subjects. Notions of autonomy and individuality throughout integration envisage an implicit subjectivity among participants, namely constructing individuals to believe that they have control over their success and failure. This makes individuals accountable for whatever misfortune they may encounter (Kurki et al., 2018; Diedrich & Styhre, 2013). Consequently, people who work with refugees are also shaped by the same discursive practices designed to construct the 'employable' refugee, as the following extract shows:

> Project Manager: we had several meetings with the employment office, where we will focus more on those who have not succeeded after their three year integration period and did not manage to proceed further, either through finding employment or getting a vocational degree. … The reason is because their skills did not reach a sufficient level to enable them to go to work or start vocational education.

> Ameera Masoud (author1): What do you mean by their skills?

> Project Manager: well … like skills in a specific vocation, that they need to stick with, in order to succeed, and move forward … some have problems still with the language. … But also, they need to concentrate, work on being motivated, become more committed, study more and all these things. … I know it is not easy especially some are mentally ill or struggling with their past or … starting all over again, but they are mature enough and have to try.

Our reading of the project manager's talk and the earlier policies both indicate a subjectivity offered by the employability discourse, namely that the refugee is

not putting enough effort into becoming employable. Refugees have to submit to and master employable subjectivity; they are required to become suitably responsible through concentrating and studying more. Learning new skills seems to be the answer to refugees' integration and the only solution to their unemployment. Since they are mature, they need to show commitment, as if that is the only thing hampering their employment.

In our discursive analysis of the policies, we also found that integration practices aim at the social inclusion of refugees, but at the same time integration training is used as a form of power over refugees (see Anthias, Morokvasic-Müller & Kontos, 2013). Accordingly, policies and institutions aim at helping individuals integrate, and promote the idea that refugees have many options to choose from in order to become employable (see Fejes & Berglund, 2010). According to the EU and Finnish integration policies (Finnish Government, 2015, 2016; EC, 2015), so-called skilled migrants are not obliged to reform or rehabilitate their skills through integration training, but our analysis suggests that refugees have to (see also Anthias, Morokvasic-Müller & Kontos, 2013). In this sense, integration programmes have created what is called 'a regime of skills' that produces differences (Shan & Fejes, 2015). Refugees are guided to have a reverse kind of skilling; instead of learning skills that suit their potentials, they become constructed as subjects who should relearn a completely new profession or a profession they have previously mastered. Their past and earlier success is not given much significance. It seems that integration practices target specifically those who are considered 'different' and automatically depicted as incompetent (Anthias, Morokvasic-Müller & Kontos, 2013; Guo, 2010).

Integration into the labour market becomes the mere aim, and learning skills is positioned as a vital part of the integration training. This is very much related to how refugees and their unemployment is considered as a burden to the welfare system (Keskinen, 2016). Refugees have to accept whatever is offered and become active citizens rather than a burden. Not only does this make integration training a mode of control (see Shan & Fejes, 2015; Guo, 2010) but it requires refugees to submit to and master a skilled subjectivity in order to become employable.

The deskilling, reskilling and skilling of employable refugee subjectivity

The Finnish government integration programme articulates the importance of 'utilizing immigrants' knowledge and skills for the benefit of Finnish society' (MEAE, 2016, p. 16). However, the following extract from an interview with one of the participants in the integration training shows how, even when one has the required knowledge, experience and skills, one is expected to submit to and master a new form of subjectivity:

> In my meeting with the employment officer, I was asked what my pro-
> fession is. When I said I had a lot of experience in business and a previ-
> ous good career, and I speak fluent English, I was told that I definitely
> have a problem. Because for two years I could not find a job. I was then
> told: do not worry, now that you are in the integration system we will fix
> the problem. So what profession would you like to choose now? (Partici-
> pant in integration training, 2017)

In the training practices, refugees are positioned as people with 'problems'. This
entails that they have to develop subjectivities that learn to submit to and master
what is suggested, even though integration training did not meet the previous
education or current interests of our interviewees. In the situation above, the
participant was given three options to choose from: childcare, practical nurs-
ing and the technical field. Similar to other integration training participants,
he starts to construct his 'employable' subjectivity according to the constitutive
force of integration practices. He becomes a speaking subject and constructs a
new subjecthood by acting according to the characteristics of the 'employable
subjectivity', which entails finding a new profession within the desirable choices
offered by integration discursive practices.

   Our analysis of the policy documents indicates that refugees have to keep in
mind that they are supposed to be 'active jobseekers' and become more inde-
pendent (see Rose, 1996) even during the integration training that treats them
as dependent:

> The conditionality of unemployment security will be changed so that
> the unemployed and part-timers are obligated to seek employment
> more actively and independently than before. (FMEE, 2017)

In integration policies, being unemployed tends to be considered a personal
deficit; thus, getting a new profession, mastering new skills and submitting
to the integration process will be the solution for the 'problem'. This is clearly
associated with the neo-liberal understanding of self-responsibility that creates
faulty beliefs about the reasons why someone is unemployed: that they are not
capable, they lack the appropriate skills, they are not putting in enough effort,
and thus need correction (Thomas, 2016; Mertanen & Brunila, 2018). In the
end, the individual needs to figure out how to continuously self-improve and be
autonomous, active and motivated regardless of the uncertainties and difficul-
ties of integration (see Kurki et al., 2018). This means that refugees are expected
to understand that, even if they are unemployed, they still need to perceive
themselves as 'employable subjects' (see Moore, 2010). Accordingly, our inter-
viewees needed to demonstrate an enhanced active employable subjectivity,
even though they are still in integration training. Refugees' subjectivity during
the integration phase is built on a constant state of ambiguity, while at the same
time they have to try to make themselves employable. This process creates mul-

tiple subjectivities (Diedrich & Styhre, 2008). Refugees are obliged to adhere to the integration plan by studying for a vocational degree, but at the same time it is considered that they ought to be searching for jobs, keeping themselves engaged and accepting long hours of unpaid practical training:

> I was asked to fill in a form and indicate only two months of unemployment. I was confused. … It is not like after two months there is a job waiting for me! The officer said: 'Well you never know, maybe you will find a job this month'. I got even more confused. … I am studying and committed to finishing this vocational education, which will last for another two years. It was not even my choice, and within this period there is no work. It only includes the practical part for five months for eight hours per day. … I said I will start searching for jobs when I finish my course. It is confusing … because are they expecting us to find a job or to study? … I am studying, this is what I was told to do in order to find work. … I feel I have a problem that I am unable to find a job, and studying is not that important. (Participant in integration training, 2017)

Here, we can see the ambivalent process that refugees have to deal with constantly. Also, during the integration process, refugees should become experts on themselves, which Rose (1996) calls the 'expertise of subjectivity' (p. 160). This means becoming competitive and responsible for making their own integration successful and meaningful through the choices they make, despite the constant ambivalences and the lack of choices (see Kärkkäinen, 2017, p. 219). This expertise includes overcoming various challenges in order to become 'employable', but this does ignores the challenges that those expectations produce:

> It is hard to be motivated. I cannot focus. In the class I feel I need to keep talking and joking. Not because I do not respect the teacher … but because this is not where I want to be. This path is not similar at all to my previous background. How can I be motivated? … I am young and so depressed. (Participant in integration training, 2017)

Without the ability to simultaneously submit to and master employability, there is a risk of losing the ability of 'learning to learn', which seems to be the only way to possible employment. As a result, refugees become speaking subjects in accordance to these discursive practices. They are also expected to have self-control, even if what they are studying does not suit their background, as the integration plan claims. The following extract demonstrates this:

> I studied for four years in my home country business and accounting. When I chose Finland because of its education system and of course

it is a safe country, I was full of hope. But when I went to prepare for my integration plan, I was told that with this field it is hard to find a job here [Raising his eyebrows, looking surprised]. That the best way would be to start a new vocational education … this way, they said, I can find a job faster or then study at a university. (Participant in integration training, 2017)

Integration policies and training practices work by making and remaking refugees' subjectivities. It is a process that starts by devaluing the self. As in the above extract, when the interviewed participant was planning his integration plan, a couple of options were given to him and one of them was a childcare programme, which was a totally different path. He mentioned that he would have preferred to work or at least study something relevant to his experience, namely business and accounting. But, instead of opposing or resisting, most of those who were interviewed preferred to abide by anything that the employment officers said. Not because they wanted to, but it was expected, as rational subjects, that they would follow the choices that had been made for them. As a result, they have to be constantly appreciative, as well as 'good managers' of their integration process, through taking advantage of the many integration programmes provided for them. At the same time, even when integration participants tried to discuss other options, they were told that this is what is available and the best for them. Consequently, they start to draw on the available integration discursive practices and begin to constitute themselves as 'employable' within these practices. In addition to the above-mentioned interview extract, these two examples from different integration participants show that:

Of course you can refuse what is offered to you and try to find the programme that suits your own experience or interests. but if you do so, you are on your own, and it is not easy to find the right place. … I tried and I know many of my friends tried to do so … eventually this will affect your unemployment benefits. … You become afraid of more losses and decide to go with what the employment office and integration professionals suggest for you … there is no time to think, and you just have to learn how to handle your integration until you get a job. (Participant in integration training, 2017)

Before coming to Finland I used to work as a barber. … As part of my integration plan, I was guided to short courses related to barbering and hairdressing. This was going quite fine, until an integration professional told me that it is better for me to start a vocational programme in construction because it is for three years. … I tried to remind her that these courses suit my previous experience and I have the knowledge in the field of barbering … so these courses will be a good way to introduce

me to the Finnish context and then I can start working. … Surprisingly, she told me to think realistically, because it is hard to find a job, and studying for three years will offer me a more stable situation at least for three years. … I asked her if it is easier to find a job in the construction field. She said it is not easy to find a job in any field, but at least you will have three years to build up your skills and during this time you will not have to keep going on from one short course to another, you will not have to worry about finding a job and you will just focus on studying a new profession. … Somehow I got convinced. (Participant in integration training, 2017)

These extracts demonstrate how the individual integration plan drawn up 'according to one's interests' becomes a one-to-one plan within a system that denies one's own potential or redirects previous experiences into what is promised to be best for the refugee. Integration becomes systemized, treating refugees as a homogenous group and offering them limited choices. Thus, the problem is not with the education provided, but with the different path that has been drawn up for most refugees.

We have discussed elsewhere (Kurki et al., 2018) how integration training becomes an advertising campaign, and the effects this produces on the subjectivity of immigrants. Integration programmes promise faster employment by adopting new skills, thus creating uniform expectations among all refugees. We suggest that this process is exclusionary, as it claims that all individuals have similar abilities to succeed and become employable (see Moore, 2010; Guo, 2010). Also, integration training becomes a tool towards providing refugees with an incentive. In this context, refugees become regulated as well as enabled, as they manage to submit to and master the process of skilling. As several refugees mentioned, during the planning stage of their integration plan they were encouraged to study a vocational degree—even though they had the skills and their previous certificates had been validated—in order to be exempt from the Finnish language test required for obtaining citizenship. When they were asked whether or not they were sure that this information is true, none of them replied with total certainty. One participant did, however, mention:

I was trying to discuss what other choices I can study. … I mentioned I have around 10 years of experience in construction, my Finnish is very good, and my previous certificate has been validated. I asked: can you at least put me in some work practice where I can demonstrate my skills. … I was told that studying is the best choice for me now, and if I study for a vocational degree, then I do not need to do the language test when I have to apply for citizenship. Somehow, that really tempted me, and they knew how to kind of 'shut me up' … at least they put me in a construction program, it is depressing because I have to study again something I know, I could already work. (Participant in integration training, 2017)

It becomes clear that, to become 'employable', refugees succumb to the fact that they need to redefine themselves by speaking and acting accordingly, whereas their motivation and skills are directed towards achieving an objective already set by the integration system. They should also be able to 'start from zero' (see Könonen, 2011; Kurki et al., 2018). In the above extract, the appropriate response for our interviewee was to be thankful that he was guided to a study programme which was similar to his previous experience. This presumes that refugees have had choice, and have a constant ability to adapt themselves to this new discursive setting and to be grateful.

Concluding discussion

In this chapter we have argued that the employability discourse related to integration policies and training practices is powerful. It works by defining the appropriate responses to events, and involves a set of associated practices through which refugees make sense of themselves and others. Consequently, integration as well as refugees' autonomy tends to be limited to a question of acting in accordance with what is expected. As a result, any other discursive possibilities for participants in integration training is considered irrelevant or even threatening. Refugees need to 'learn to learn' to act as employable subjects through the power relations of integration discursive practices. As a result, employability in our analysis has been understood as an ongoing process whereby refugees become speaking subjects while being subjected to the constitutive force of integration discursive practices. The employable subjectivity formed by integration policies and discursive practices is always constructed and is never fixed. This is why we were interested in highlighting what integration policies and practices do to the subjectivities of refugees, and in their ability to integrate and become employable. We argued that the making of employable refugee subjectivity concerns a reversed process of skilling; a vicious cycle of deskilling, reskilling, and skilling. Refugees' subjectivity is constructed by constantly submitting to and mastering the ability to survive the vicious cycle of skilling, and to manage their own integration through shifting and forming their subjectivities according to each situation, until they manage to find a job.

   Integration training drives individuals towards a constant ideal of becoming employable, yet it seems, regardless of their efforts, that they are never employable enough in specific fields. This is an obstacle towards their transition to work life, remaining in transit rather than reaching the final destination of integration, namely employment. Consequently, refugees seem to remain in integration limbo for several years (see Kurki & Brunila, 2014). According to Shan and Fejes (2015), and our analysis, the one who is skilled and/or competent enough largely depends on how society considers the matter. Regardless of the fact that the interviewees in our study had extensive skills and their certificates have been validated, they were unable to find a job, which says a lot about the

social structures and labour market access in Finland. Attributing failure to reach employment as an individual deficit draws attention away from power relations and structures that created, and continue to create, unemployment and inequality among refugees (see Fejes & Berglund, 2010). Integration discursive practices represent a strand of regulative and productive power, encompassing subjects that can be known and spoken about, both by oneself and others such as integration policies and professionals. This makes it easier to create and recreate refugees as 'more manageable other[s]' (Spivak, 2004, cited in Andreotti, 2007, p. 72). It seems that integration practices are becoming more restrictive, whereas refugees' voices and previous skills remain absent within the integration sphere. Despite their qualifications and previous experiences, they are only 'conditionally employable'. This means that refugees are not seen as employable in certain fields, because they lack one important element: they do not demonstrate enough Finnishness (Näre, 2013; see also Forsander, 2008).

Employability as a form of successful integration constructs refugees as 'not yet employable', and as a homogeneous non-active group lacking agency, skills and resilience. Integration as a procedure has a tremendous impact on refugees, on their future, and on society as a whole. Integration programmes justify taking advantage of refugees' situation through numerous integration projects under the guise of making refugees employable. The negative perception towards the 'unemployed' constructs refugees as individuals who are incapable of being productive enough in society and the labour market, and are thus seen as dissimilar to work-related migrants simply because they are subjectified as 'unskilled'. This not only debilitates the individual but is also a waste of potential skills. Integration training does not always acknowledge what the individual would like to learn, as promised by the policies, but refugees cannot refuse what is given to them when an integration plan has been adopted. Accordingly, rather than pursuing self-interest education and employment, the refugee becomes a person who has to increase her value (as a commodity), in order to be more employable and cross the 'border' (see Walkerdine, 2006). This requires the constitution of different subject positions according to different discursive practices.

Providing further education could be beneficial to some refugees, but offering further education and skilling for everyone masks other societal reasons that are behind their unemployment. Hence, the 'employable refugee' subjectivity depends on a variety of elements and characteristics that requires constant making and remaking of the self to achieve the desirable and right kind of subjectivity. Consequently, the focus is on 'fixing the unemployed' rather than 'fixing the causes of unemployment'. Further education does not guarantee a job, nor is it enough to represent the new skills that refugees have acquired. Issues of ethnicity might signal a lack of cultural knowledge and could determine refugees' employability. Refugees' past success and skills are, in most cases, irrelevant and mean little either in the integration process or to employers. We may thus ask, can new skills really guarantee employment? And what

determines that refugees have become 'employable'? Is it their skills, their ability to secure a job, or completing integration training?

Notes

[1] These documents were selected based on their central role in shaping national and European level of integration policies and practices in general, and integration through skills and employment in specific. These documents include, for instance, *A New Skills Agenda for Europe. Working together to Strengthen Human Capital, Employability and Competitiveness* (EC, 2016); *A European Agenda on Migration* (EC, 2015); *Integration of Beneficiaries of International/Humanitarian Protection into the Labour Market: Policies and Good Practices* (EMN: European Migration Network, 2015); *Work in Finland—Government Migration Policy Programme to Strengthen Labour Migration* (FMI: Ministry of the Interior, 2018); government integration programme outlines areas of focus for integration in the coming years (FMEE: Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2016); *National Core Curriculum for Integration Training for Adult Migrants* (FNBE: Finnish National Board of Education, 2012).

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Young People's Transitions—Policies and New Forms of Governing

CHAPTER 6

Young People and Transitions in Upper Secondary Education in England

The Influence of Policy on the 'Local Opportunity Landscape'

Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours

English upper secondary education: a system in transition

The English upper secondary education (USE)[1] system is in a process of transition. From September 2015, young people have been expected to remain in some form of education and training up to the age of 18 as a result of the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA). Previously, compulsory education ended at 16. Since the early 1990s the majority of young people have chosen to stay on in education or training beyond 16, but with sharp declines in participation at the ages of 17 and 18. However, despite RPA, English USE still operates as if 16 were an end point rather than a progression marker of a longer phase. These 'internal' difficulties suggest that USE in England has yet to develop into a mature and universal phase.

It is for this reason that we focus primarily on the transitions of young people *within* the English USE system. Much of the literature on transitions has examined what happens to young people after they leave education and wish to enter higher education or the workplace (e.g. Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009; de Graaf & van Zenderen, 2013), but our argument here is that, unless young people manage to negotiate the transition hurdles that lie within the English USE system, they are unlikely to make a successful final transition to employment or further study. This chapter examines, in particular, the effects of national government policy on what we term 'middle attainers'—a diverse group, which is defined in the next section, constitutes just over half of the 16-year-old cohort and has been strongly affected by policy as it makes its way through the four stages of transition in USE.

The chapter begins by describing the English USE system and how international trends and national policies have influenced its development into what we term a 'pure Anglo-Saxon model'. The main section analyses how policy impacts on the transitions of middle attainers and notes the importance of the 'local opportunity landscape' for these young people. We conclude with a discussion of different approaches towards the organization of localities that might positively affect learner transitions.

USE in England has been subjected to constant reform for over 30 years, in terms of curriculum and qualifications, institutional arrangements, governance and the relationship between the education system and employment, all of which affect learner transitions. This phase is thus still 'emergent' and there is no settled will about its future trajectory. Nevertheless, there are traditional features that have remained constant. English USE is relatively broad between the ages of 14 to 16, with elective specialist study post 16, and is largely 'education-based', with a small work-based learning route. Currently, students are examined in a wide range of subjects at the age of 16. These qualifications are known as General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs). Beyond age 16, however, the curriculum narrows considerably and divides into three broad groupings at level 3 (advanced level)—general education taken by just under half of the 16-year-old cohort (typically three or four A level subjects and including those on 'applied or mixed' programmes of A levels and vocational subjects) and full-time vocational programmes at foundation (level 1), intermediate (level 2) and level 3 taken by 39% of the cohort (DfE, 2017a). At age 16 the work-based route is very small, with only 5% participating in an apprenticeship, traineeship or schemes such as Entry to Employment. For the remainder who do not fit into these groupings, there is a variety of alternative or individually tailored programmes. It is, therefore, possible to leave the school system at 16 and to pursue further study in a variety of institutions and through a variety of routes and levels.

Middle attainers—an important but overlooked group

It has always been the case and continues to be that progression for some young people has been more straightforward than for others. Higher attainers tak-

ing a 'royal route' via GCE A level programmes to university have had a more well understood and direct form of transition from school to further study and then later into employment. As USE has expanded in England, however, so it has drawn in learners with a wide range of prior attainment profiles for whom progression pathways beyond the age of 16 have proven to be more complex, less well understood and subject to constant reform.

Considerable research has already taken place on the most vulnerable learners, who are often described as NEETs—those not engaged in employment, education or training (e.g. Spielhofer et al., 2009; Hayward & Williams, 2011). Less attention, however, has been given to the progression patterns of a significant group of young people who lie between 'vulnerable learners' and 'high attainers'. In the context of a focus on transitions we classify 'middle attainers' as a diverse group sitting between confident A level students taking three or more subjects and with the prospects of attaining good grades and more vulnerable learners who post 16 will normally participate in foundation learning (level 1) or be classified as NEET. At 16, therefore, middle attainers can be seen to comprise those currently on the margins of A level participation and attainment or taking a mixed general and vocational programme (estimated at about 10% of the cohort); those following broad vocational programmes such as vocational qualifications at levels 2 and 3 (about 34%) and those involved in apprenticeship and traineeship (about 5%). We estimate, therefore, that in 2017 this 'middle attainer' group accounted for just under 50% of the 16-year-old cohort (DfE, 2017a). We suggest that the progression and transition patterns of these particular learners provide an interesting barometer of the overall effectiveness of USE because they represent the ability of the education and training system to produce high rates of level 3 outcomes at age 18/19, a notional benchmark for higher education or supervisory roles within the workplace.

In this chapter, we have focused on the relationship between attainment and transition opportunities because of the way that qualifications are used as the currency for determining progression through USE in England. The key qualification for access to 16+ education and training is the level 2 GCSE. National statistics indicate clearly that social class, gender and ethnicity all play a role in attainment at 16. Most notably, only 44% of young people classed as disadvantaged (a proxy for social class) gained passes in English and mathematics GCSE, compared with 71% of all other pupils (DfE, 2018). This means that a greater proportion of socially disadvantaged young people are to be found in the middle-attaining cohort.

For middle attainers the 'opportunity landscape' at the local level is very important because this is where their educational (and often their employment) trajectories are played out. The English education system has become highly organisationally diverse, marketized and with strong institutional competition for students, particularly post 16 (Pring et al., 2009; Edge Foundation, 2017). There is now a range of education and training providers in this education market, including 11–18 maintained schools, funded via local authorities; academies, free schools, sixth form colleges (primarily for 16- to

19-year-olds) and general further education colleges that are all autonomous of local government and mainly take young people from the age of 16; and more recently a small number of directly centrally funded studio schools and university technical colleges, both of which take learners from the age of 14. While these institutional arrangements, which vary markedly from locality to locality, offer young people a wide choice of provider, they can limit curriculum choice and compromise the offer of impartial careers advice and guidance because institutional competition is largely focused around higher-attaining students. Institutional competition also makes it more difficult to construct clear progression routes between different education providers (Ofsted, 2013; Edge Foundation, 2017).

Increasing levels of participation—tensions and challenges in USE

England is not alone in reforming education for 14- to 19-year-olds. USE systems globally are going through a process of expansion (Sahlberg, 2007; OECD, 2017). As they expand and become more universal, USE systems experience a number of tensions that flow from shifts in their student populations and wider changes in the economy and society. Here we characterize these tensions in terms of 'internal' and 'external' challenges. The internal challenges arise primarily from increased demand for USE. More effective primary and lower secondary education, together with rising levels of attainment and social aspiration, have fuelled participation in USE. As a result, these systems are becoming more diverse, having to provide both an end point for those young people who seek entry to the labour market and a preparatory stage for others who are seeking to enter higher education. Universal systems thus have to cater for students with differing levels of prior attainment, interests and degrees of commitment to continuing education. At the same time, there are growing 'external challenges' arising from globalization and a greater diversification in society. While internal factors tend to lead to diversity, international literatures suggest external factors create pressures for unification—i.e. for academic and vocational learning coming closer together, for the requirement for more common 21st century competences to be built into the curriculum and for a greater uniformity of experience to support social cohesion (e.g. Le Metais, 2002; Ananiadou & Claro, 2009).

This rapidly changing landscape presents new challenges regarding the management of student transitions—not only how to effectively prepare young people with differing transition aims but crucially how to enable them to successfully complete the phase, thus preventing 'early school leaving' (European Commission, 2013). The challenges of an expanded/universal USE and longer youth transitions have been addressed in different ways by various national systems. Often reflecting long-standing national traditions, countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland, with large apprenticeship systems, have

responded with what Iannelli and Raffe (2007) refer to as an 'employment logic'. The majority, however, have responded according to an 'education logic', which has seen an expanded USE based on full-time education participation beyond lower secondary education and involving both general and vocational learning offered in one or more providers. These systems include, for example, the Nordic countries, France and the UK.

In terms of curriculum and qualifications, responses have differed according to whether learning is segregated/tracked or integrated/unified (Raffe et al., 1998). We have argued elsewhere that the English USE system has become increasingly segregated/tracked since 2010 (Hodgson & Spours, 2014a; Spours, Hodgson & Rogers, 2017). In some systems, general education and vocational education and training are institutionally segregated, being offered in different types of schools/colleges (e.g. the Netherlands). England is increasingly following this pattern from the age of 16, with schools and sixth form colleges more often offering general education and further education colleges and work-based learning providers specializing in vocational education and training.

English USE—from an 'adaptive' to a 'pure' Anglo-Saxon model?

Lying behind these responses to rising participation are broader global models of reform that are designed to raise levels of student attainment in an era of neo-liberalism. Sahlberg (2007) identified three models—the Anglo-Saxon, Pacific and Nordic. He suggests that the Anglo-Saxon model, which is sponsored by powerful global organizations, such as the OECD, and consolidated and codified through international performance measures such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), has been the most influential in terms of constructing a Global Education Reform Model (GERM). We will suggest that the global model of reform adopted has significant effects on transitions within USE.

The English USE system has since 2010 come to represent a more 'pure' form of the Anglo-Saxon education and training model with the confluence of several strands of policy that can be associated with both the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition and the subsequent Conservative administrations:

- a more markedly *tracked approach to qualifications*, with a focus on 'rigour' in general education (e.g. more external testing in both GCSEs and A levels, a reduction in modular assessment, an emphasis on the study of and examination in traditional academic subjects for 14- to 16-year-olds and the reintroduction of linear A levels that will be examined once at the end of the course);
- further impetus towards the *marketization of schooling* (e.g. the rapid expansion of academies and free schools that are independent of local authorities);

- greater *standardization* of teaching and learning (e.g. a reformed National Curriculum with a greater emphasis on a traditional canon of knowledge, spelling, grammar and punctuation);
- an increased *emphasis on accountability* with publicly available performance tables and a stronger role for Ofsted, the national inspectorate, as the 'enforcer' of many of these reforms (Spours, Hodgson & Rogers, 2017).

This recent shift can be contrasted with what might be seen as the 'adaptive' Anglo-Saxon model of the earlier New Labour government (1997–2010). By the term adaptive we are referring to the way in which New Labour, while broadly pursuing a neo-liberal approach to governance, tempered this with mild social democratic policies (Hall, 2003). In terms of USE, for example, they created linkages between academic and vocational qualifications that offered new routes to middle attainers, and adopted a mixture of institutional competition and collaboration that saw the rise of a number of 'weakly collaborative 14–19 partnerships' at the local level to support new applied routes (Hodgson & Spours, 2006), while still relying on the use of a wide range of national policy levers (e.g. targets, performance measures, inspection and funding) to mould institutional behaviour (Coffield et al., 2008).

In addition to education policy, there is the understated but deeply influential dimension of the labour market. The Anglo-Saxon model could also be seen to depend on a flexible labour market with a culture of employer voluntarism and minimal state regulation. With regard to this dimension of the model, there appears to be little difference between the approaches of the New Labour administration (1997–2010), the subsequent coalition (2010–2015) and the Conservative administrations (2015–). Flexible labour markets represent a deep-seated UK-wide economic policy assumption (Keep & James, 2012) and have considerable support from employers (CBI, 2017).

The research base

The chapter weaves together three sets of research and theoretical contributions published over the last 10 years. The first concerns the 14–19 policy initiatives and their governance arrangements under the New Labour government that left office in 2010. These include the outputs of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research project 'The Impact of Policy on Teaching, Learning and Assessment in the Learning and Skills Sector' (Coffield et al., 2008), the 'Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education in England and Wales' (Hodgson & Spours, 2006, 2008; Pring et al., 2009) and a three-year local project tracking 2,400 young people in a 'flagship' 14–19 consortium in the south-west of England as they progressed within upper secondary education between 2008 and 2011 (Hodgson & Spours, 2013a). This cluster of research projects focused

in particular on local institutional collaborative arrangements and their effects on middle attainers under New Labour's 'adaptive' Anglo-Saxon model.

The second set of research focuses on the more marketized institutional arrangements promoted by the coalition government (2010–2015). Here we draw on evidence from two further local/regional research projects. The first, undertaken between 2010 and 2012, was situated in a deprived seaside town on the east coast of England and consisted of interviews with the local authority and regeneration agencies, education providers and local employers to gather their views about the locality and the opportunities and barriers it presented for young people. A total of 92 young people were also involved through focus group interviews to capture their perceptions and aspirations in relation to progression and transition in the locality (see Hodgson & Spours, 2013b). The other project concerned London, a global city and England's capital (Hodgson & Spours, 2013b, 2014b). Between 2012 and 2014, research was undertaken on 14–19 collaborative arrangements involving interviews with representatives of 20 of London's 32 local authorities, together with an investigation of the problems of 17+ learner transitions in the capital. The latter involved the analysis of pan-London participation, attainment and progression data and in-depth investigations into three London boroughs, together with interviews in a total of 14 providers of USE. Both sets of research were extensively discussed with local and regional stakeholders.

The third dimension of research is current and concerns an ongoing investigation into the effects of the pure Anglo-Saxon model on the performance of 14–19 education (USE) in England with the emergence of 'system stagnation' represented by the plateauing of attainment and participation rates that could disproportionately affect middle and lower attainers (Rogers & Spours, 2018).

The effects of policy on the transitions of middle attainers

In this section we use the evidence from these studies to illustrate the effects of policy on four key transitions within English USE that affect middle attainers in particular.

- *Transition 1*. How the preparatory phase of upper secondary education (14–16) supports young people for transition at 16+.
- *Transition 2*. How young people choose or are selected for their post-16 route.
- *Transition 3*. How young people perform in their first year of post-16 study and whether they are able successfully to complete upper secondary education within the expected norm of two years.
- *Transition 4*. How young people move into the labour market and higher education.

Transition 1. Qualifications reform and the attainment of 14- to 16-year-olds

There has been considerable policy turbulence in government curriculum and qualification policies for 14- to 16-year-olds under all governments since 2002. The general trend under the former was to provide greater choice for learners by reducing the compulsory elements of the National Curriculum at this point and allowing schools and colleges to offer a broader range of both general and applied/vocational qualifications. Although there was no statutory requirement to change the 14–16 curriculum, schools were strongly incentivized to reform through exhortation, funding steers, inspection and the enhanced points value that applied/vocational qualifications were given in national performance tables. As a result, the proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five A*–C GCSE (or applied/vocational equivalent grades)—a key national benchmark that is often seen as the minimum requirement for entry into level 3 study—rose year on year during the duration of these policies. These results thus potentially allowed more learners, including middle attainers, to make the transition to the next stage of USE at level 3 (the level required for graduation to higher education).

During this period, the schools in our south-west study fully embraced these opportunities and learners were strongly encouraged to take up applied/ vocational qualifications alongside or instead of their GCSEs. While the national policy steers undoubtedly provided a major incentive, senior manage-ment teams also saw the 'vocationalization' and broadening of the curriculum for this stage as a way of engaging and motivating their learners to participate and achieve, as well as providing them with valuable points for progression to post-16 education. This position was strongly supported by the learners, with the middle attainers we interviewed being the most enthusiastic about their courses. Moreover, as a result of their increased engagement with 14–16 study programmes, the majority of middle attainers aspired to continue in full-time education post 16. These study patterns and the positive responses of 14- to 16-year-olds to the broader and more applied curriculum were similar in the east England study. Students indicated that they liked a wider choice of subjects, found vocational and applied programmes helpful, and felt they were learning skills that would assist them in gaining employment or further/higher edu-cation. However, many were also aware that post-16 providers valued GCSEs more highly than their equivalent level 2 vocational awards.

Once the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government took office in 2010, there was a sharp reversal of policy. A review was undertaken of applied/vocational qualifications that concluded that many were of little value and should be withdrawn to make way for a stronger focus on academic subjects, particularly English and mathematics (Wolf, 2011) and a new per-formance measure was introduced—the English Baccalaureate—that judged schools according to the percentage of 16-year-olds gaining high grades in five traditional GCSE subjects.

The results of this turnaround in policy clearly proved a dilemma for schools. We only have anecdotal evidence from our research studies of how they responded, but national data suggest that schools have increasingly focused on a more traditional academic curriculum (Henshaw, 2017) and reduced significantly their offer of applied/vocational awards (DfE, 2015). Furthermore, for the first time in 2014, the proportion of students nationally gaining the five A*–C GCSE benchmark declined sharply (DfE, 2017b). Given the results from our earlier studies, we could speculate that it is the middle attainers who are losing out, with fewer able to make the transition to academic post-16 level 3 study.

This position has been compounded recently because GCSEs themselves have also been reformed to make them more demanding through a reduction in coursework, greater emphasis on traditional content, grammar, spelling and punctuation, the removal of the modular design that allowed students to retake parts of the award in order to improve their final grade and the redesign of the grading system. Similar changes have been put into place for A levels too. It could be argued that this will reduce the mismatch between the 14–16 and 16–19 general education pathways, but in doing so it will also reduce curriculum breadth and make entry to, and successful completion of, this track available to a narrower band of students. Others—many of them middle attainers—will be forced into the less prestigious applied/vocational programmes that also often result in a more tortuous transition process and have higher dropout rates (DfE, 2017c).

Transition 2. Choice, selection and 'transitions tripartism' in the post-16 market

Age 16 marks an important transition point in the English system in what has until recently been regarded as the school leaving age. In 2015, however, over 90% of young people stayed on in education beyond the age of 16 and overwhelmingly opted to continue in full-time study (DfE, 2017d). At the same time, age 16 is also a point of considerable 'churn', with over 60% of this cohort leaving their secondary schools for new institutions (ibid.). These will have been mainly middle attainers who have either elected to leave the school for a new start in a college and for a particular type of course or who have been denied access to their own school sixth form because they do not have the entry requirements for A levels. Age 16 is thus a point of both transition and selection as students attempt to make the leap between pre- and post-16 qualifications in a climate of intense institutional competition.

In the English USE system there are no nationally defined admissions requirements for the transition between pre-16 and post-16 study programmes. Individual institutions decide on their own admissions criteria. These are determined by the type of institution and can vary significantly locally (e.g. selective

11–18 schools are likely to require higher grades than more 'comprehensive' schools and sixth form colleges tend to require higher grades than general further education colleges).

Evidence from the three local studies suggests that the policies of recent governments in encouraging an education market have had a significant effect on students' transitions at 16+ and the processes of choice and selection. Labour's policies of 'weakly collaborative' 14–19 partnerships provided a very limited counterweight to this historical trend. Under the coalition government and subsequent Conservative administrations, the creation of more academies and free schools intensified competition for students at a time of declining demographic trends.

Competition between schools and colleges has been strongest for high-attaining students with selective and high performing institutions often able to 'cream off' the 'top end' from their neighbouring secondary schools in order to boost their own sixth forms. At the same time, less selective 11–18 schools have had to diversify their provision in order to retain students and remain economically viable. Many have established a few broad level 3 vocational courses to keep middle attainers on roll, although numbers enrolling are often very small. Some institutions, particularly those starting new sixth forms, have also lowered their entry requirements for A level courses, thus exposing less academically prepared students to the rigours of A level study, with all the attendant risks.

Furthermore, access to impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) has proven difficult because of the overwhelming self-interest of schools to retain certain students and to rid themselves of others. The policy encouragement of institutional self-interest has been coupled with the dismantling of the Careers Service as an independent voice for young people because it is now the responsibility of schools to offer CEIAG. The risk is that many young people end up on inappropriate courses (Ofsted, 2013; HoC, 2016). Interviews with groups of 15-year-olds in the south-west research project suggested that some middle-attaining students, and young men in particular, have a tendency to choose 'safe' options post 16 in terms of a familiar learning environment, to be close to friends and not to have to travel a distance to specialist provision; 11–18 schools that try to keep their middle-attaining students staying on 'at all costs' may thus be colluding with low aspirations through what we have termed 'comfort zoning'. Parents also play their role in this 'Faustian pact'. Many will advise their children to take A levels as a traditional and well-established qualification even though the conditions in this route may not suit their child.

The dominant role of 11–18 schools in a marketized system at 16+ affects not only the distribution of learners between post-16 providers; it also works against the less visible work-based route. There is a lack of understanding of apprenticeships in schools and little incentive to suggest that their high-attaining students should start one at 16 (Ofsted, 2013; HoC, 2016). This is a contributory

factor that keeps the apprenticeship system and work-based route small for young people, with only 6% of the 16–18 cohort participating (DfE, 2017d).

The overall effects of the education market appear to be the creation of 'transitions tripartism' at 16+: the securities of the academic route to higher education; the complexities of a 'middle route' as many students engage on the margins of A levels, opt for mixed academic/vocational programmes or engage with broad vocational education courses; and the relative invisibility of a small work-based route at 16. Far from raising standards, improving the breadth and quality of provision or ensuring satisfying outcomes from USE, the effects of an enhanced post-16 market appear to lead to the opposite. What we see is the growth of stratified and risky transitions that for middle attainers, in particular, will tend to show up a year later at the 17+ transition point.

Transition 3. The 17+ barrier and early school leaving

At the end of the first year of post-16 study, the lack of curriculum and qualifications articulation between 14–16 level 2 study and post-16 level 3 study and the effects of the education market conspire to make this transition point particularly difficult for middle attainers in the English USE system. The problem of the '17+ transition point' comprises two related issues: first, 17+ 'retention' and whether those who stayed on at 16 are also participating in the second year of study; second, how well students attain at 18, which for most marks the end of USE. While the 17+ issue was evident in all three local areas, it was a particular focus of the London study because of the contrast between the relative success of 14- to 16-year-old middle attainers at Transition Point 1 and their evident difficulties beyond this.

In terms of full-time education participation, the English system sees relative declines during the 16–18 phase, from 87% at age 16 to 77% at 17 and 50% at 18 in 2016 (HoC Library, 2017). Delving deeper, data on London schools demonstrated, for example, that only 62% of learners with five A*–C grades at GCSE or vocational equivalents, but without English and mathematics, remained on to the second year of A level study in their school sixth form. The retention rates for those taking level 3 vocational/applied courses in a school sixth form were even lower. Problems at 17+ also impacted on attainment at 18. In the case of London, learners attained higher examination results in GCSEs than the national average pre 16, but lower than the national average post 16 as measured by overall A level points. A major factor behind this was the reduction in the size of programmes of learning as students dropped more than one subject at the end of their first year of study, thus reducing further the breadth of an already narrow curriculum (Hodgson & Spours, 2014b).[2]

While the 17+ issue has been mainly focused on the transition to level 3 provision post 16, it also concerns those learners who enter 16+ education not having attained the benchmark of five GCSE A*–C grades with English and

mathematics. This accounted for just under 30% of the cohort in 2013 (DfE, 2014b). Our London research suggested that, of those learners who started level 2 courses post 16, less than one third would progress to level 3 study a year later. These level 2 learners thus faced even greater progression problems than 'marginal' level 3 learners in relation to the 17+ barrier.

The London study also provided insights into the reasons for the '17+ barrier'. From discussions with practitioners across 20 London boroughs and in-depth interviews with heads of post-16 study and head teachers in 10 schools, we arrived at a set of 'risk factors' that contributed to inadequate examination performance, dropping one or more subjects, changing course or post-16 provider or dropping out of education altogether (Figure 6.1).

At first glance the majority of these factors appear to relate to learners, their families or wider society (e.g. lack of preparedness for post-16 study, lack of parental support or increased incidence of mental health problems) or ones that could and should be tackled at school level (e.g. enhanced subject choice or improving teaching and learning). However, behind many of them lie the powerful effects of national policy—in particular qualifications reform, the role of the post-16 education marketplace and the deep-seated problem of a historically shrinking youth labour market.

Effects of the education market also begin to tell at 17+ in terms of the quality of provision. In London, as elsewhere in the country, schools have been encouraged to seek independence of local authorities and to become academies that are directly funded by national government. In order to ensure the popularity of their academy with parents, and often encouraged by their academy sponsor, headteachers will decide to add or retain a small sixth form for 16- to 18-year-olds. Evidence from the three studies in the south-west of England,
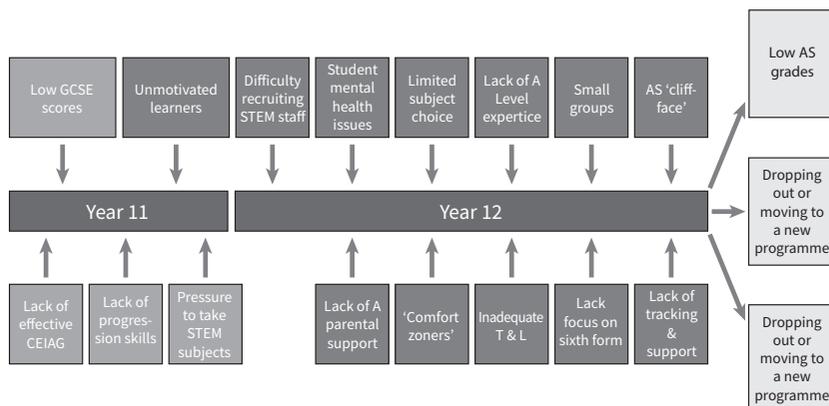
Figure 6.1: Risk factors and the 17+ barrier.
STEM=science, technology, engineering and maths; T & L=teaching and learning; AS 'cliff-face' refers to the difficulty of making the transition from intermediate to advanced level study, represented here by the AS qualification.

London and the east coast suggests that this may be the case even when there are already strong and popular alternative post-16 providers in the locality. A number of institutional risks result. Small or new sixth forms are less able to offer a wide range of subjects, so learners may not be able to take those they want and are likely to succeed in. Sometimes the sixth form does not have a sufficient proportion of high-attaining learners and the optimum class size to create the environment for successful teaching and learning. In addition, teachers often lack expertise for this level of provision because the majority of their teaching experience has been with younger learners taking GCSEs, for which different skills are required.

Our research shows that difficult transitions at 17+ have a considerable impact on middle attainers because it means that they need to change course (often starting again from the beginning), move to a different institution or try to find their way into work or an apprenticeship, often with little information or guidance. The 17+ issue could thus be viewed as a particular version of 'early school leaving' that is defined as failure to complete USE and to add significantly to the level of qualification attained at the end of lower secondary education (European Commission, 2013).

Transition 4. Moving on from USE—transitions into the labour market and higher education

While the 17+ issue is very much focused on transitions within full-time education, lying behind it are deep-seated problems of the lack of labour market opportunities for young people because of the structural decline of youth jobs in the UK economy (UKCES, 2012). This is particularly felt at Transition Point 4, which sees most young people exit the USE system at 18+.

The overall trend at 18+ over the recent period in England has been the rise in higher education participation (DfE, 2017d). This was encouraged by the New Labour government's Aim Higher campaign to widen higher education participation, with the policy aim of having 50% of young people participating in university by the age of 30. However, the higher education policies of the coalition and Conservative administrations from 2010 onwards were different, the main thrust being a large hike in tuition fees and the encouragement of an education market, particularly in relation to recruiting young people who have attained high A level grades.

At the same time, participation in apprenticeship up to the age of 18 over the past decade has remained relatively static at about 6% of the 16–18 cohort (DfE, 2017d) despite being a favoured policy by successive governments. The problems of weak signalling from the surrounding economy to young people became clear in all our local studies. In the deprived coastal town in east England, for example, many of the young people we interviewed simply did not believe that the North Sea renewables energy industry would arrive to produce

greater opportunities. Their view of the local labour market reflected historical and existing conditions—that the fishing industry had declined and that there was going to be a continuing prevalence of low-wage, low-skill and low-attraction retail, agricultural and food processing work. London presented a very different economic environment, although with its own problems for young people. In the London study, it was clear that education participation was having a greater impact on the activity of young people than the metropolitan labour market. While London learners are more highly qualified than in most other parts of the UK, not only is the work-based route proportionally smaller when compared nationally; London also has the longest delays in the transition between higher education graduation of London learners and entry to employment. This is because it has the highest graduation rates but also the highest unemployment rates for graduates (ONS, 2017). The roots of these problems lie less with the quality of education and training and more with the nature of the employment market in the capital, which is predominantly financial and service sector-oriented. These features attract migrants not only from abroad but also from the rest of the UK. Young Londoners, particularly middle attainers with lower qualification outcomes, are often outcompeted in a regional labour market that already has a paucity of youth jobs.

Summary—the English version of USE limits the transitions of middle attainers

Our research suggests that the 'adaptive' Anglo-Saxon policies of New Labour and its 'pure' form under the coalition and Conservative governments have had a powerful effect on the transitions of middle attainers. New Labour's qualifications reforms opened up opportunities for 14- to 16-year-olds while closing them down for 16- to 18-year-olds. They could be seen to have 'half-helped' middle attainers but ultimately let them down (Hodgson & Spours, 2013a).

On the other hand, government policies since 2010 have been much more threatening to the middle attainer. These young people have been overlooked as a group and scattered between increasingly strongly defined and selective academic education and scarce high-quality apprenticeships. Competing schools and colleges are keen to recruit these learners, but are less able to organize effective and extended progression routes for them (Spours, Hodgson & Rogers, 2017). And this group may be particularly vulnerable to continuing government cuts in funding for post-16 education (Belfield, Crawford & Sibieta, 2017) because they require more support to be able to function effectively in USE. The English USE system has uniquely low hours of tuition compared to relatively successful USE systems (SFCA, 2015) and the position is deteriorating under the policies of austerity. These factors, combined with a stalled youth labour market, mean that the middle-attaining group is in danger of becoming the new education 'precariat' (Standing, 2011).

Building a local opportunity landscape—a new terrain for transitions

Developing High Progression and Skills Networks linked to the local economy

In the final section of the chapter we argue that the futures of these young people cannot be guaranteed by top-down divisive policies or by the vagaries of the market but, instead, require a more organized local opportunity landscape. Middle attainers will not, by and large, leave their area to attend university. The learner who is willing to travel to learn but not to migrate from their home requires a more solid local collaborative landscape within which to progress and to undertake successful transitions to further study and working life, most often through vocational education. This will mean not only the development of appropriate, high-quality provision but also the building of clear progression routes into further study and employment that actively involve collaboration between education and training providers and wider social partners at the local and regional levels.

The practical first steps to support the progression of all 14–19 learners will require the building of a collaborative infrastructure at the local level where education providers, employers and other social partners see themselves as key contributors to both a more effective education and training system and economic development of the locality. One possible formation we have termed High Progression and Skills Networks (HPSNs) (see Hodgson & Spours, 2018).

HPSNs might be understood as a set of formalized, dynamic relationships between social partners at the local or sub-regional level designed to transform that locality/sub-region through sustainable economic, social and educational development. It is based on an ecological concept of interdependence: that none of the individual social partners can achieve this objective alone but that transformation will only take place if they combine their specialist functions. Each of the partners has a different, yet complementary, role within the network and one that might change over time (see Figure 6.2). In the current English context, HPSNs could emerge from new post-Area-Based Review sub-regional Skills and Employment Boards, such as those being developed in London (Spours et al., 2018).

Roles for schools and colleges collaborating with other social partners might include:

- providing the knowledge and skills to support both work- and college-based learners to move upwards and along a latticework of progression routes and transitions between initial learning, work and more continuous learning;
- developing specialist technical provision at the higher levels closely linked to growth areas of the locality's economy and services;

Figure 6.2: High Progression and Skills Networks (HPSNs).

- nurturing longer-term collaborative projects between employers (particularly SMEs), local government, higher education and further education and training providers to identify specific skill demands; to co-design relevant learning opportunities; and to develop effective progression routes;
- stimulating innovation in learning and in work practices to ensure skills utilization and sustainable economic development.

Supportive wider reforms—towards a new education model

New types of local partnership working, while an important step, will not in themselves overcome the main effects of the Anglo-Saxon model on the transitions of young people. These new and emerging local structures will need to be supported by a wider set of reforms that begin to shift the fundamental governance of education policy (Evans, 2015) and curriculum policy.

In previous publications (e.g. Hodgson & Spours, 2012; Spours, Hodgson & Rogers, 2017) we have argued for a gradual but co-ordinated effort to create a new model of USE in England that is more unified and progression-oriented and less divided and selective. More specifically, Transition 1 (14–16) will require a curriculum that has a greater focus on progression skills for 14- to 16-year-olds with less emphasis on completing a range of subject-based GCSE examinations. Transition 2 (16+) will need a step change in the delivery of careers education, information, advice and guidance, with a much greater role for impartial voices in the form of the local authority, careers specialists, the

contribution of active partnerships discussed in the previous section and less institutional competition. Transition 3 (17+) suggests the need for changes to level 3 qualifications so that the increased intellectual demands that are needed to succeed in USE are matched by efforts to create a gradient that the middle attainer can climb, together with greater flexibility to combine different forms of knowledge and skill. For some this will mean taking more time (three years rather than two post 16) and increased hours of tuition for all. Finally, Transition 4 requires action beyond education and a closer relationship with the local and regional economy, highlighted in the development of HPSNs.

But gradually moving the education model away from its Anglo-Saxon orientation and towards a more collaborative and social partnership model will also require a more fundamental rebalancing of the state, in which national government sees its role as strategic leadership and enacting the devolution of power so that regional and local government and communities have the necessary tools to transform their localities and regions within a clear national framework that supports equity and social justice. Without these shifts and new relationships it is hard to see how English USE can support the progression of all young people, including the overlooked middle attainer, to become a modern and universal upper secondary phase.

Notes

[1] This is not a commonly used term in England. Rather, this phase is referred to as '14–19 education and training', but here we are using upper secondary education because it is more commonly used in international comparisons.

[2] The normal pattern during this period was to take four AS subjects in the first year of study, dropping down to three in the second year.

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Economic Worries— Therapeutic Solutions?

Entrepreneurial and Therapeutic Governing of Transitions of Young People

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Introduction

Transitions of young people have become more unpredictable and complex. Consequently, new categories and classifications have emerged for those young people failing to make successful transitions (Ecclestone, 2010; Wright & McLeod, 2015; Kurki & Brunila, 2014; see also Chapter 8). Peter Kelly (2006) has stated that young people in transition have been a target of various authorities, which develop individuals into a particular form of personhood that he has described as the entrepreneurial self. The entrepreneurial self is a form of personhood; it is a discourse that constructs individuals as being responsible for conducting themselves in the business of life, as an enterprise, a project, a work in progress (Kelly, 2006; see also Mononen Batista-Costa & Brunila, 2016). In parallel, the

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rapid rise of a therapeutic ethos enhancing psycho-emotional vulnerabilities in the education and in the wider youth support systems has been acknowledged in several European, including Nordic, countries (Irisdottir Aldenmyr & Olson, 2016; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013; Brunila & Siivonen, 2014).

Although the idea of youth transitions as linear and progressive has been widely critiqued, the fact remains that there is a thriving policy about the best ways in which to prepare for and support transitions of young people. Because of the economic crises, the threat of unemployment of young people has led to multiple responses. For example, in Europe a remarkable assortment of transition activities such as cross-sectoral political initiatives, programmes, courses and publicly funded projects assist young people's transitions into society.

In every European Union country, investments have been made to reintegrate young people into education and work (see e.g. Commission of the European Communities, 2005; Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014; Hansson & Lundahl, 2004). In other words, there have been multiple authorities and forces, a so-called 'transition machinery' within a whole variety of complex assemblages involved with governing young people.

At first glance, the entrepreneurial discourses involving competitiveness and the urge to succeed may seem quite different from the therapeutic discourses of self-centredness and psycho-emotional vulnerabilities. However, this chapter focuses on Finland and questions how entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses indeed work together to govern young people's transitions. It is suggested that entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses jointly participate in constructing the ideal subject built on autonomy and self-reliance.

Entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing of transitions

> The Finnish education system is renowned for its performance, effectiveness and quality; however, not all young people do well. There are lots of health and mental health problems that slow the transitions to education and work. In addition to supporting young persons' growth and development, the prevention of exclusion is important also for the national economy. Young people's exclusion costs society hundreds of millions of euros each year. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2012, p. 6)

Conducting and shaping young people's transitions has been important to policymakers for several decades. For young people who are experiencing this so-called transition machinery without noticeable struggles, the current situation might seem unproblematic. Nevertheless, although most young people seem to face few difficulties, they are systematically perceived as a problem (Furlong, 2013; Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015; Wright & McLeod, 2015). In addition, a new, more hybrid model of governing that is produced by the alliance of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses seems to be developing.

In order to analyse entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing of young people's transitions, the ideas of new governance and governmentality have been combined. New governance is a market-oriented attempt to introduce territorially unbounded public and private stakeholders operating outside of their formal jurisdictions into political institutions' decision-making processes (Ball, 2012; Lindblad & Simola, 2002; Bailey, 2006). In addition to new governance, therapeutic governing represents a form of governmentality (Brunila, 2012) because it links the constitution of individuals more closely to the formation of the state and to shaping the subjects' actions. As organized practices through which individuals are governed (Rose, 1999a), entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing extends marketization even further into educational practices as a form of governmentality. From a discursive standpoint, it becomes possible to analyse the ways in which, in the current policies and practices, certain things are constructed as good, true and desirable, while others are constructed as the opposite. Therefore, it is important to ask how the transition machinery works and what consequences result from its deployment.

The alliance of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses works on and in state and public organizations. The state is important as a regulator and market-maker in the way that marketization is embedded through quasi-markets, networks of public and private partners, and the enterprising-up of public organizations (Ball, 2012; Rose, 1999a). The notion of freedom in order for the government to work is essential (Rose, 1999b; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013). As Andreas Fejes and Magnus Dahlstedt (2013), referring to Foucault, write, the governmentality of today is dependent on the freedom of citizens. Without the freedom to choose, there is only a situation of constraint, and there would be no governing (ibid., p. 9). It is important to understand that this 'freedom' stems from the conditions of possibility—the discourses that prescribe not only what is desirable but what is recognizable as an acceptable form of subjectivity (see Davies, 1998).

In a market-oriented society, young people have been made more accountable for their labour market fates (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). Viewed this way, the orientation has been towards a new kind of resilience with competences built on self-discipline and continuous self-development, aiming to produce entrepreneurial subjectivities and entrepreneurial selves (Komulainen, Korhonen & Räty, 2009; Bottrell, 2009). By entrepreneurial discourses, we refer to discursive practices of policies and practices of youth support systems that seek to promote this kind of subjectivity.

> Evidence suggests that developing entrepreneurial mindsets is a key ingredient of endogenous growth, and a must for sustainable local and regional development and social cohesion. The role of education in promoting entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours is widely recognized today. Transversal competences like creativity, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship will help young people to develop their capacity

to think creatively and to innovate, to develop pro-activity, flexibil-
ity, autonomy, the capacity to manage a project and to achieve results.
(European Commission, 2012, p. 5)

In order to secure the entrepreneurial subjectivity described above, entre-
preneur education has gained space, especially among EU-based funding in
Finland. By 2008, Finland was already considered a forerunner in entrepre-
neurial education: the country had done more than any other European coun-
try in this area by permeating it into the entire educational system (Kyrö &
Ristimäki, 2008, p. 260). Since the 1990s, 'the strategy of promoting entrepre-
neur education and projects that support it have been actively implemented'
(Gustafsson-Pesonen & Kiuru, 2012, p. 7). During 2000–2010 there were over
150 publicly, mostly EU-funded projects concerning entrepreneurial education
(Gustafsson-Pesonen & Kiuru, 2012). Due to the influence of the EU and other
economic and political organizations such as the OECD, there seems to have
been a shift of practices in the domain of education towards entrepreneurial
and individualized discourses. This has required a formation of a 'right kind' of
subjectivity, as an objective of education, in order to legitimate itself (Kallo &
Rinne, 2006; Korhonen, Komulainen & Räty, 2011).

   In addition, as Diane Cole has suggested, the construction of discourse of
'entrepreneur' involves a certain kind of 'seductive heroism' (Cole, 1998, p. 60).
This means that, by acknowledging one's own strengths and weaknesses and
using the awareness that it produces, one can become a hero of their own life
(see also Mononen, 2007). This is how the discourse of the entrepreneurial self
becomes neutral and abstract: this subjectivity is presented to be available for
everybody. It is presented as a means to succeed, to overcome and to break
barriers that discursively shaped societal differences such as gender produce.

   Here it is argued that this entrepreneurial self is linked to education's orienta-
tion towards a more therapeutic meaning (see also Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009;
McLaughlin, 2011; McLeod, 2012; Procter, 2013; Simmons & Thompson, 2011;
Brunila, 2012). Several researchers have already stated that crises of late capital-
ism are intensifying pessimism about declining emotional and psychological
well-being, disengagement and motivation among growing numbers of groups
and individuals deemed to be 'at risk' (see Ecclestone, 2013; Wright & McLeod,
2015; Brunila, 2012, 2014). Therapeutic discourse is a part of a wider societal turn
that has been the focus of much research during several decades (e.g. Wright,
2011; Foucault, 2009; Rose, 1999a; Furedi, 2004; Pupavac, 2005). *The Dangerous
Rise of Therapeutic Education* (2009), by Kathryn Ecclestone and Dennis Hayes,
aroused a critical discussion of therapeutic interventions in educational politics
and practices. Nowadays, the rise of both entrepreneurial and therapeutic ethos
in education have already been acknowledged in Europe, Canada, Australia and
the United States (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009; Furedi, 2004; Wright, 2011; Fejes
& Dahlstedt, 2013; Procter, 2013; Brunila, 2012, 2014).

   Therapeutic ideas, knowledge and practices on education policy, teaching
and assessment practices seem to be extending both their reach and impact.

Rooted in what is commonly described as the 'vulnerability zeitgeist' (Brown, 2014) or 'therapeutic society' (Wright, 2011), eclectic applications of ideas and practices from positive psychology, emotional literacy/intelligence, psycho-emotional support, self-help and counselling are increasingly popular in educational settings in growing numbers of countries (Ecclestone, 2013; McLeod, 2012; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013; Burman, 2009). Alongside, the 'psy-disciplines' (psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapies) and psychopathology have played a more important role in contemporary education settings (e.g. Harwood & Allan, 2014; Rose, 1998). In terms of young people, these approaches have several things in common such as an explicit focus on psycho-emotional vulnerabilities and an expanding range of young people deemed both formally and informally to be psycho-emotionally vulnerable (e.g. Brunila et al., 2017).

A wide array of researchers has raised concern about the consequences of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses. They worry about education being replaced by market-oriented and therapeutic interventions, the individualization of societal problems and consideration of children, and the vulnerability and fragility of pupils, students and adults who are not capable of influencing their own lives (Burman, 2009; Harwood, 2006; Brown, Ecclestone & Emmel, 2017; Simmons & Thompson, 2011; Dahlstedt, Fejes & Schonning, 2011; Wright, 2011; Siivonen & Brunila, 2014).

In this chapter, entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses are analysed together because they provide a mode of more effective governing of transitions, resulting in an excessive concern with the self, enhanced by the therapeutic society (Wright, 2011) and the market-oriented order that emphasizes individualization, self-reliance and economic interests. The alliance works because it is able to define a cultural script for appropriate feelings and responses to events, and a set of associated practices through which people make sense of themselves and others (see also Brunila & Siivonen, 2014).

At first glance, the self-centredness and personal deficiencies and psycho-emotional vulnerabilities of therapeutic discourse may seem far removed from the entrepreneurial discourses involving competitiveness, performance, self-responsibility, efficiency and the compulsion to succeed in order to cope with the uncertainty and unpredictability of contemporary life and the market economy. Despite the differences between the therapeutic and enterprising discourses, both have emerged in tandem with the neo-liberal spirit driving the restructuring of education (see Rose, 1998; Brunila, 2012). Thereafter, they have also worked together towards shaping an autonomous, self-reliant, enterprising, flexible and self-centred ideal self of the neo-liberal order (Rose, 1998; Kelly, 2006; Komulainen, Korhonen & Räty, 2009; Brunila, 2012).

Data and discursive approach

This chapter draws on data from three separate studies belonging to two joint research projects and especially to the ongoing 'Interrupting Youth Support

Systems in the Ethos of Vulnerability' study funded by Academy of Finland and led by Kristiina Brunila. It relates to young people and support systems focusing on the ways in which wider market-oriented, therapeutic and entrepreneurial discourses imply and elicit a subjectivity that is simultaneously vulnerable and enterprising. When it was discovered how both enterprising and therapeutic discourses were already intertwined in the joined data, the subjectivities of young people that were constructed in these discourses were examined. The realization of the similar aims in entrepreneurial and therapeutic education led to a need to analyse them together.

The first study, conducted by Kristiina Brunila from 2011 to 2018, was concerned with short-term educational and rehabilitation programmes targeting young people transitioning from school, and particularly those not engaged in education or work. The more than 60 programmes in the field of vocational and adult education in Finland support, train, guide and rehabilitate unemployed young people 'at risk'. In practice, the programmes are usually short-term support systems funded by the EU, government, ministries, municipalities and associations. The programmes were visited, at which time in-depth interviews were conducted with over 30 youth workers and over 80 young people and young adults between the ages of 19 and 29.

The second study, conducted by Katariina Mertanen, is part of a study about short-term education and training programmes targeted at young people considered 'at risk'. The data used in this chapter focus on prison education in Finland, and consist of criminal and education policy documents, such as the Criminal Act, the Criminal Sanctions Agency's education strategies, and curricula of the education offered in prison. During 2014, Katariina Mertanen produced ethnographic data on both female and male inmates' education in a closed prison in Finland, and interviewed prison staff, teachers and students. The education programmes visited were those involved in preparatory education for vocational education, where the emphasis is on building knowledge and skills needed in vocational education up to degree level. In addition, Katariina Mertanen has also analysed the education policies concerning young people and risk of social exclusion in the European Council's and Commission's reports between 2000 and 2017.

The third study is on Finnish entrepreneur education. In the study, Sari Mononen Batista Costa asks how the current market-oriented discursive practices permeate the everyday life of education; how the subjectivity and agency of young people are negotiated in the practices of entrepreneur education, and how the current education policy aims to promote entrepreneurship from the (scientific) production of knowledge concerning entrepreneur education. Sari Mononen Batista Costa has analysed policy documents, governmental and educational programmes concerning entrepreneur education from 1990 to 2014, and observed entrepreneur education programmes at school during 2014. This chapter uses her interviews with two young people, formerly labelled 'long-term-unemployed', who became entrepreneurs because of an employment

scheme by the Finnish Employment Office. In addition, she has interviewed some of the central actors in the field of entrepreneurial education in Finland, and one of these interviews is also quoted in this chapter.

In this chapter, the entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses are analysed together, as an alliance participating in governing the transitions of young people. In terms of young people, support systems are not just being shaped by competitiveness and efficiency but involve even more implicit changes in the ways in which young people are expected to perceive themselves. The vocabulary of an entrepreneurial and therapeutic ethos links political rhetoric and regulatory programmes to the 'self-steering' capacities of young people themselves. This alliance works towards individualizing education, and this in turn requires the right kind of subjectivity as a target in order to legitimate itself. Both of these discourses work by regulating personal existence by encouraging distancing the self from others, causing the self to turn inwards and seeking to maximize one's own human capital and to shape oneself in order to become what one wishes to be (Rose, 1999a). Consequently, the aim of both the therapeutic and enterprising discourses is to produce a coherent and self-reliant subjectivity of the humanistic ideal.

The focus here is on the effects, on what discursive practices do, and what they enable young people to imagine and do to themselves and others. The therapeutic and enterprising discourses in youth support systems are understood in terms of discursive power; the relation between knowledge, discourse and power as productive and regulative with material effects is acknowledged. Likewise, it is recognized that power related to entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses is complex and multifaceted. This chapter shows that this type of more effective governing results in an excessive concern with the self—enhanced by therapeutic culture and the marketization that emphasizes individualization and economic interests. The mechanism of this alliance is the market, the 'free' exchange of those with a service to sell and those who have been prompted to buy (Rose, 1998).

By utilizing the idea of subjectification (Davies, 2005), the form of power related to the alliance works and its effects in the forming of subjectivities related to transitions of young people are examined. This has also helped to analyse how certain discursive constructions are appropriated while others are discarded as irrelevant or even threatening (see also Petersen, 2008). Through these discourses, young people in transitions become speaking subjects while being subjected to the constitutive force of the discourses. In addition, the entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses as a form of governing are never considered to be fixed. Bronwyn Davies (1998) writes that, due to the nature of this kind of approach, it is possible to see subjects as not fixed but rather continuously engaged in a process, being constituted and reconstituted through the discourses to which they have access in education. The tensions and instabilities in subjectivity become visible through an examination of the discourses through which subjectivities are constituted. Further, the discourses through which young people are constituted are also often in a state of mutual

tension, providing the subjects with multiple layers of contradictory meanings inscribed in their bodies (Davies, 1993).

Governing transitions of young people by entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses

It could be argued that the entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses complement each other for the benefit of the markets and for shaping a more flexible and self-centred labour force. The economic concerns that are expressed by the European Commission construct a discourse that young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training are economically and socially threatening:

> This [youth unemployment] poses a serious threat to social cohesion in the EU and risks having a long-term negative impact on economic potential and competitiveness. EU institutions and governments, businesses and social partners at all levels need to do all they can to avoid a 'lost generation'. (European Commission, 2012, p. 2)

> Regarding young people, in Finnish educational policy documents the entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses are already intertwined: An advancing society is founded on entrepreneurial activity. Psychological, physical and social welfare is underpinned by individuals' own activity, their responsibility for their own action and care for their fellow beings. Economic welfare entails strong and competitive entrepreneurship. (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 12)

The aim is that the student's own life management skills and their studying, career and other future plans become possible. Accordingly, teaching should encourage the student to understand studying as work and knowledge and skills as the basis for well-being. The aim is that studying helps the student to confront the challenges of the changing world more creatively and flexibly than before.

These policy paper extracts show that, by focusing on the individual and emphasizing individuals' responsibility and autonomy, the focus can be kept on reproducing a coherent and autonomous individual who studies and works in order to reproduce economic growth and welfare (see also Siivonen & Brunila, 2014). A similar discourse is replayed in educational programmes targeted at young people:

> The project supports, encourages and gives young people opportunities to be active, engage in active citizenship, become entrepreneurial and

engage in entrepreneurial and spontaneous activity. (Extract from an EU-funded youth programme)

The extract is a typical example in our data. It is from a document produced by an EU-funded project during the 2000s that provided short-term education and guidance for young people. These programmes that have been analysed aim to provide young people with certain types of predetermined skills and competences as well as an entrepreneurial subjectivity. These skills and competences present a subjectivity that is constructed with internalized entrepreneurial orientation and attitudes. Accordingly, entrepreneurial subjectivity becomes subsumed by therapeutic subjectivity, where the subject turns attention to their own feelings, fears and strengths. The will to work and develop entrepreneurship with one's self also leads to governing one's emotions and attitudes.

Governing through personalities and experiences

Based on the joint analysis, entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing operates by creating, shaping and enhancing certain types of psycho-emotionally vulnerable subjectivities, as our data (documents and interviews) show:

> Young adults who are seen to be in danger of alienation need support and intimacy. The importance of handling their feelings is crucial. (Youth programme report).

> Young people have low self-esteem issues. (Youth programme report)

> Young people are vulnerable, fragile and highly sensitive. They need to be handled with care. (Interview with a youth worker)

> Young people have so many personal problems. They have low self-esteem, mental health problems, learning problems, attitude problems, all kinds of problems (Interview with a youth worker)

> Growing mental illness amongst young people is one of the most serious public health challenges. (Youth programme report)

In several European countries, the government responses towards young people have focused on attributes and competencies of emotional well-being and mental health. Accordingly, in various youth support settings typical initiatives for young people have included therapeutic activities such as interventions for emotional well-being, activities for raising self-esteem, emotional education, and all kinds of direct behavioural training, as well as happiness training (Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015; see also Chapter 8). Based on the joint analysis,

educational programmes such as those analysed in this chapter have provided a routine in aiming to govern a certain type of subjectivity.

The role of education in this type of governing is to help young people in transitions to cope with their difficulties in a specific way that is held to be empowering; it should be a process through which they learn to deal with their personal deficits such as low self-esteem, dependencies and emotions, which in turn leads to coping in the labour market:

> I have finally learned to believe in myself. Before I guess I did not believe enough, I had all kinds of problems, but luckily, the project helped. I know it's all up to me; I can if I want. (Interview with a young person)

> The responsibility is mine. I know that of course. (Interview with a young person)

As in the two extracts above, from the interviews of young people taking part in support systems, the governing works by producing practices where young people are invited to speak, act and feel accordingly. It is not enough that young people are able to perform therapeutic and entrepreneurial ideals in certain contexts. The discourses they have access to must become their own, rooted in their personalities and in their own experiences so that they will become self-responsible, to be in charge of their own lives. Through these discourses, young people are encouraged to work on themselves, to find their true inner selves and to become more aware of themselves, their limitations and emotions (see also Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013; Brunila, 2012).

> Well … when you look at these [goals of education programme in prison] there comes right away the social skills, working in a group, opening up and talking about one's feelings and thoughts and experiences. And just last week I had a conversation with one of the students and working life skills were thought to be very important too. (Interview with a teacher in prison)

> Addressing the young person in a right way is important. You have to know how to do it because they can have many personal problems when they come here. (Interview with a youth worker)

As can be seen in the previous extracts from interviews with youth workers and teachers, the promise of the governing is tied to selfhood so that the autonomous self is able to discover itself through a specific type of support that is enabling with predetermined skills and competences that help eliminate psychological and emotional chains; thus, young people are able to become more entrepreneurial and self-disciplinary. As the gaze is pointed to the individual and his or her competences, the societal differences, such as gender, can be

reduced as personal problems that can be overcome by becoming (or choosing to become) more entrepreneurial.

In the data, these support systems were discussed with several young people. During the discussions, programmes were usually described as providing good starting points. In some of the discussions, young people reported that because of these programmes they were able to work with their emotions, and to express feelings they had never before been able to express. This was the way several young people talked, focusing on the importance of recognizing emotions as providing appropriate personal skills and competences and eventually success and happiness related to work and family life. Many noted that the responsibility was really their own. For example, a 29-year-old 'long-term unemployed' woman who was directed to entrepreneurship education and to start her own business by the Finnish Employment Office (otherwise she would have lost her social benefits), stated that in the course she had learned that the only one she can count on is herself. She also expressed the satisfaction that she gets when she does 'her own thing':

> I've been told that I'm the boss. If I want to negotiate, it's in the mirror in front of me. … But it doesn't bother me what I'm doing. It's my own thing, not somebody else's. I want to live by doing the things I like.

In terms of this type of governing finding one's own thing was also described as a preferable future scenario in prison education. In an interview with teachers in closed prison, becoming an entrepreneur was described as a success story of prison education:

> Yes … a few of our students have gotten excited to apply [for continuing education after courses in prison]. … One student got into the education program to be a masseuse and is now an entrepreneur. These are super important experiences of success and although we can't change the direction [of prisoners' future plans] immediately the planted seed will sure grow. … But, who knows?

The ideal subject in this type of governing is described as someone who is strong, capable of conquering difficult situations, setting and following goals and making independent decisions about his or her own life (Cole, 1998). In the previous extract, the success story of a former student is set up as an example of the preferred outcomes in education such as self-reliance and self-reflection. In this manner entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses work together to produce similar subjectivities, with the 'right' attitude and abilities to make the 'right' future plans (see also Mertanen & Brunila, 2018).

Yet the ideal subject is under constant negotiation. Although one success story is raised as an example, possibilities with other young people are reduced to their personal issues with vague or non-existent plans. This legitimates the

reproduction of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses as an essential part of support. It also removes the responsibility for the success of education and other programmes from the authorities and individualizes the failure to cultivate the planted seed.

In Sari Mononen Batista-Costa's data, a young entrepreneur, who was directed to start a business by the Finnish Employment Office, stated that in his area of business, which is music, it is not easy to make a living. His firm was becoming too expensive for him. As an ideal subject of entrepreneurial discourse, he had learned to become calculating when it was considered useful:

> There are businesspersons, who sell something, like soap, which everybody needs. Their aim is to make money, but in my case, my profession is not a business, but music. The firm is a tool to be able to make music. It is my area, music, but from the point of view of the business, it's not good, if you think about the viability.

In the ideal order, one has to be able to form a subjectivity that is flexible and calculating enough to be able to provide the right, useful and productive way to use the venture. To be able to make music, one needs the venture. But, because it doesn't pay enough, calculation is necessary, although it can produce undesired and unexpected consequences:

> They do not participate in music projects the way they used to, because they have to think all the time if it is good for the business. We all used to be friends, but now a new group is reforming, the ones who are making money and the ones who are not. They need to calculate all their actions through the firm.

The outcome of governing tends to push young people to make a project out of their own identities and they have become bound to the powers of expertise of people working with them. Despite education and other support, such as various types of short-term projects and preparatory programmes, young people's autonomy is easily limited to speaking in accordance with what is expected. These young people are not necessarily expected to share an interest in society as a whole. Instead, they are expected to become obedient to the powers of expertise and to fulfil the needs of working life.

> Interviewer: How about being an entrepreneur? What, is it? I just got interested.

> Young person: Yeah, well I think it interests us.

> Interviewer: What's the thing with that?

Young person: Well, some of us want to be entrepreneurs after this.

Interviewer: What kind of business?

Young person: Construction work, probably. I will go to do some air conditioning engineering in my own company with a friend.

Interviewer: Are you going to be an entrepreneur?

Young person: Yeah. I hope that things will start to go well.

In the group interview with seven young people in prison, there was hope and desperation simultaneously. Given the decreased possibilities of being employed after incarceration, becoming an entrepreneur was a tempting option. The students performed the mastery of the entrepreneurial discourse, but, at the same time, they were subjected to the uncertainties that label working life today.

Conclusion

Regarding young people's transitions, there seems to be a good intention to secure equality of opportunity as a way of helping young people to achieve more educationally and in their lives in general. However, this chapter focused specifically on transitions and support systems that have been permeated by entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses. As a form of governing of transitions, the alliance of entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses offers a specific type of vocabulary, explanations and assumptions about appropriate responses as an assemblage through which young people make sense of themselves and others.

This alliance works towards a similar aim. The therapeutic discourse offers to free young people from their psychological and emotional chains so that they may take control of themselves and their lives and become more self-disciplinary and effective in terms of labour market demands. Similarly, the entrepreneurial discourse carries an idea of emancipation. Through self-knowledge and management, different learning and communication skills, the barriers of class, nationality and other societal differences are supposed to lose significance.

Therapeutic and entrepreneurial discourses are consonant with the political rationales that are currently at play during this period that could be described as neo-liberal. In neo-liberal times, young people, their capacities and self-actualization become central. They are entangled with other notions such as autonomy, agency, individuality, self-esteem and control. This is how young people in our data are expected to learn to understand themselves, in terms of a kind of 'inwardness'. This is indeed the way in which entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses harness the whole young person, shaping it more effectively.

In an era of multiple crises, entrepreneurial and therapeutic discourses seeking to govern individuals seem useful and even seductive. Together they tend to strengthen the idea of the human as essential, as malleable and as potential. This is the way the type of governing analysed in this chapter works, by enabling young people to become certain kind of subjects in relation to other subjects within a society. Clearly, this system seems to work by getting young people to express their 'inner thoughts and emotions' and feel liberated as a result.

As a means to avoid a lost generation, the entrepreneurial discourse is supported by the public funds of the European Union as well as governmental implementations. Young people's unemployment, which also could be explained as a structural societal phenomenon that follows the 'negative impact on economic potential and competitiveness', is treated as an individual problem. This problem is constructed as a lack of entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, and this is when therapeutic means is introduced. Economic problems receive therapeutic solutions.

However, it is too simplistic to characterize the mechanisms and consequences of this type of governing as only repressive or victimizing. Instead, as is shown in the chapter, governing shapes the subjectivity of young people by encouraging or compelling them to speak and act through entrepreneurial and therapeutic language and social relations. This raises questions for further research about what forms of subjectivity, agency and knowledge, it overlooks and denies, and for whom.

In a way, this type of governing does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentred apparatus that aims to incorporate more realms within its therapeutic and entrepreneurial discourses. In this chapter, a critical discursive approach suggested that entrepreneurial and therapeutic governing if recognized as a form of discursive power relation can be seen as a possibility, where spaces remain for negotiating and resisting these power relations.

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Ethical and Care-Oriented, but Still Psychological and 'At Risk'

Teachers' Constructions of Young People's Transition from School to Society

Sara Irisdotter Aldenmyr and Maria Olson

During the last decades, the phenomenon of therapeutic education has been launched internationally. This trend is not only part of a general stress on health and well-being as a counterweight to increasing numbers of young people's ill health. It also addresses *transitional* trajectories of welfare, addressing the relationship between life in school and life in society for young people to relate to or occupy as part of their societal membership and training for 'proper' citizenship (cf. Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014; see also Chapter 7). In this chapter, the role of teachers in relation to this trend is highlighted. More precisely, the main question raised is: what descriptions of young people and their alleged transition from life in school to life in society stand out in compulsory teachers' talk about their therapeutic teaching? We take our point of departure in a previously carried out empirical study in the Swedish context, where teachers who are assigned to teach therapeutic education programmes are interviewed about their teaching

practice and their professional role in it. Through the descriptions, trajectories of young people's transitions from school to society are scrutinized. Taking on these descriptions, and on the notion that therapeutic education relies heavily on psychological trajectories of young people's well-being, young people's transitions emerge through a general positioning of being incapable to face their future outside of school and thereby risking not attaining social, mental and emotional well-being but instead falling into psychological illness in a 'society at risk', if not being prepared for a life in society through therapeutic teaching. However, the teachers not only express their role as health promoting instructors in psychological terms. They also express other enterprises and reflections that connect to other discourses than the psychological one: discourses that are established within the professional context of therapeutic education itself, and thereby not as sensitive to the notion of 'children of today' and their alleged lack of emotional and mental well-being. In these additional, and at the same time traditional lines of descriptions of the teachers' therapeutic teaching, the students come into being as more capable and in need of normative guidance rather than of emotional care. In the ethical discourse of care they also, we argue, come into being in more reciprocal senses than in the other discourses.

The emerging differences in the teachers' descriptions are linked with different approaches to a therapeutic culture (Furedi, 2009; Wright, 2011). This culture can be related to an international educational trend marked out by therapy and the concept of well-being, and also to certain notions of welfare (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009; Brunila, 2014; Petersen & Millei, 2016). From a regional perspective, we may speak about a therapeutic Nordic welfare state that establishes itself and its citizens as the object of allegiance. As a consequence, an altered cultural depiction of young people emerges where the citizens of the therapeutic state are to be empowered, emancipated, esteemed, affirmed and actualized through education in specific *ways* and with specific *objectives*. This can be seen in light of a more widespread neo-liberal educational turn, where children and young people are to learn how to work upon themselves in order to become autonomous and 'free' to choose their own destiny, often in terms of employability and self-realization through work and career (Irisdotter Aldenmyr, Jepson Wigg & Olson, 2012; Olson et al., 2017).

The strengthened impact of so-called psy-discourses (e.g. psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis) can be seen as closely allied with this educational (and therapeutic) empowerment of children and young people. Psy-discourses provide a grid of intelligibility for certain identifiable and controllable propensities of the young, such as motivation, intelligence and attitudes. It is further elucidated how political claims are being made on the very basis of the experienced and inherent vulnerability of youth. These claims tend to be coupled with different kinds of therapeutic (often psy-oriented) solutions, aiming at empowering them or helping them cope.

Taking on this critical perspective on therapeutic education, it could be argued that the current demand for youth recognition in education not only takes on a specific psychological form but is also framed within a therapeutic discourse

of assumed vulnerability and fragility (cf. Harwood & Allan, 2014; see also Chapter 7). This research points to the need for schools to include programmes with concrete solutions for mental health interventions, in order to prevent and counteract mental illness among young people in school. The arguments—from research and from policy—are generally connected with suggestions for teaching practices that entail large-scale measurements and positive (developmental) psychology (cf. Bywater & Sharple, 2012; House & Loewenthal, 2009). Other arguments refer to the widespread notion of a crisis of well-being among young people that defines them as not only vulnerable but also incapable. Nonetheless, they tend to be made responsible for their own future and life in society (cf. McLaughlin, 2012; Brunila et al., 2016; Brunila & Rossi, 2017). What therapeutic education needs, according to this critical understanding of therapeutic education, is not more intervention but rather more critical reflection on the intervention programmes that are in use in many schools in Western society (see also Gillies, 2011; Myers, 2012; Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015).

In this tension-filled educational research landscape, where therapeutic intervention in school is seen as on the one hand necessary and on the other hand part of a 'responsibilization' of an allegedly vulnerable youth, a dialogue has been initiated between these two strands (see also Ecclestone et al., 2010; Ecclestone, 2012). This chapter can be seen in light of this approach as it stresses the need to map and discuss the very conditions through which different notions of the therapeutic culture are being played out in education (see also Irisdotter Aldenmyr & Olson, 2016). Here, its implications and effects for young people's future are in question, which emerge in terms of *transitional conditions* which are, according to teachers, made possible for them to occupy.

Psychological intervention in education—reinforced by what?

During 2010–2012, a group of researchers, including one of the authors, carried out interviews with 17 school principals and municipal officials who held key positions in the introducing of therapeutic intervention programmes in youth education in six different municipalities in Sweden. In these interviews, a pattern was identified in the descriptions, which can be described as 'a declaration of misery', which in turn seemed to be the main motive for introducing various types of intervention programmes. As an example, one principal refers to general notions about young people of today. She talks about official figures of mental illness, drug abuse and criminality among young people. These are, according to her, the 'origin problem', but the programme she uses (Social and Emotional Training) has proved to be helpful for social relations as well. Another crucial factor in this principal's story is the problematic parent generation, who cannot provide a safe social environment for their children. Owing to these factors, she claims children today are 'a bit lost'; they are egocentric and 'more fragile' than before.

The discursive patterns that emerged in the material from the interviews with the principals and municipal officials may be understood as part of a

widespread discourse about a well-being crisis that urges Swedish schools to take therapeutic action (Gunnarsson et al., 2013). The conviction that children are at risk and in need of therapeutic support seems to underpin the development of intervention programmes to promote well-being among schoolchildren. The understanding of this argumentation as part of the wider therapeutic trend in Swedish society is supported by Dahlstedt, Fejes and Schönning's (2011) Foucauldian analysis:

> The image of worsening mental health among youth constitutes parts of a general trend in society whereby individuals are being increasingly and intensely encouraged to work on themselves, to find their 'real selves' and to become more aware of themselves, their limitations and abilities, to improve their self-confidence, and to learn to manage their emotions. (Dahlstedt, Fejes & Schönning, 2011, p. 402)

The quotation addresses the ways in which therapeutic exercises such as confession or 'telling about oneself' are part of current educational practices that construct or shape subjectivities desirable in the present context (see also Nielsen, Dalgaard & Senger, 2010; McCuaig, 2012; Brunila, 2011, 2012; Tamboukou, 2003). In a therapy culture, this is partly done by means of counselling, sharing and mentoring. The act of counselling may be 'used to bring the insides of people's heads into the domain of power/knowledge' (Fairclough, 1992. p. 59).

From this discourse-analytical perspective, therapeutic action raises questions like: what makes it possible and relevant to talk about mental illness, psy-discourse, crisis, a toxic childhood and the need for educational intervention in our time and in our context? These are crucial questions that help to identify notions that otherwise might remain implicit as self-evident. However, raising these important and relevant questions may not cover all aspects of the rise in psychological interventions in youth education. If critical research merely takes as its point of departure the assumption that *all* activities of psychological intervention are underpinned by the same rationales, value systems or discursive patterns, there is a risk of neglecting important nuances and aspects, not least those that depend on what individual teachers rely and reflect upon.

Throughout history, the task of schools to foster and attend to moral development has been characterized by different individually held teaching aims and working methods, mirroring the current moral and social norms in society. Joakim Landahl's analysis (2006) shows how chastisement, punishment and grades for behaviour and order were used in the first half of the 1900s in the Swedish context, while the fostering dimension of teachers' work today is dominated by working on the strengthening of social relations and the development of self-esteem. David Hansen (2007) talks about today's intellectual and moral attention to students being present in every teacher–student meeting. In this interpretation, the fostering dimension is an inevitable quality in every educational event. Understanding the fostering tasks or dimensions as integrated in

all teachers' work and part of a long-term teacher tradition of pastoral care may from this perspective make it less significant to refer to psychological intervention one-sidedly as an answer to an urgent need for therapeutic attendance among the young.

Of interest is whether there are *alternatives* to the discourse of psychological well-being and educational intervention efforts in the context of teachers' traditional task of giving pastoral care and promoting self-development within the framework of established school subjects (cf. Pett, 2012; Cigman, 2012). Is there a possibility that this kind of reasoning and qualities are present when teachers interpret and perform the intervention programmes? And, if so, what discourses of youth transition from school to society can be scrutinized in these and other descriptions of the teachers' therapeutic teaching? Cigman (2012) continues: 'Good teaching *provokes* and *elicits* children's emotional responses; it cultivates them in distinctively Aristotelian ways' (p. 456). This reasoning brings to the fore a set of questions that puts education and teachers in the spotlight as powerful stakeholders that constitute youth. Regardless of what intervention programmes of psychological rationales are in use, it is the teachers, together with their students, who in everyday life determine what happens in the classroom. The constitutive voices and interpretations of the teachers are not, we argue, sufficiently well illuminated in either the debate on therapeutic education or its impact on the implications for young people's future. Taking this argument forward, we put questions to the teachers on what they see themselves to be part of when carrying out various types of therapeutic education, and how their points of view relate to the fostering task of the teachers and of (therapeutic) education itself.

Life competence education and well-being intervention—the Swedish context

In Sweden, therapeutic intervention of various types has been labelled livskunskap: life competence education (LCE).[1] LCE is a phenomenon that has developed in Swedish compulsory schools over the last two decades. The character of this phenomenon is not easy to grasp, since the actual activities behind similar labels may differ. In most cases, however, manual-based programmes, with exercises for students and teacher manuals, are used. Most programmes focus on socio-emotional training, empathy training and group exercises in order to strengthen personal development, self-esteem, self-reflection and self-knowledge (cf. Löf, 2011; Irisdotter Aldenmyr, 2012). Despite some attempts during the nineties and the beginning of the 2000s by some political parties to make LCE a compulsory school subject, it still has no official syllabus (Löf, 2011). However, interest groups in the field, both researchers and political lobbyists, are still active in trying to promote making LCE a compulsory subject (cf. Sevéus & Terjestam, 2011).

In some Swedish municipalities, the decision to conduct LCE on a weekly basis has been made by municipal officials, although most schools conducting these activities have done so as part of local initiatives (cf. von Brömssen, 2013). There are several working programmes or manuals available, among which three are represented in this chapter and presented below. There are a number of similar activities in other countries, even if they are not all connected to a clear psychological orientation but sometimes to more traditionally established school subjects, such as religious education or physical education.

Purpose of the chapter

The present chapter aims to analyse descriptions of Swedish teachers conducting the teaching and exercises of LCE, in order to identify notions of young people's futures in these descriptions. We deal with this aim through the following questions:

- What lines of arguments and logics stand out as central in teacher descriptions of LCE teaching in Swedish compulsory youth education?
- What discourses of young people's (needs in the) transition from school to life in society stand out in these descriptions?

A further question for discussion in the chapter is the extent to which the LCE teachers seem to have adopted the rationale of a well-being crisis, and, if so, with what kinds of expressed logics or regularities they identify.

Method and analytical grids

The material in the present study consists of interviews with 10 teachers in youth education in Sweden (ages from 10 to 16). We have used the phenomenon of LCE as a platform and point of departure when interviewing the teachers about their experiences of therapeutic intervention in education.

The 10 teachers work at five different schools in four different municipalities in Sweden. All teachers were interviewed for about an hour each and the main topics were possibilities, hazards and experiences from working with LCE. In relation to these topics, reflections on being a teacher, teacher responsibilities and the implementation of new educational tasks and working materials were raised. Today's students and reflections on contemporary society were also brought to the fore by some of the informants.

Among these 10 teachers, four different main approaches to working methods for LCE are represented. They are:

- *SET* (Social and Emotional Training). A Swedish programme developed with inspiration from the American programme SEAL. This programme

aims to increase children's and young people's mental well-being as a part of the efforts to prevent mental illness, drug abuse, criminality and other social problems. The programme includes five basic elements: self-awareness, managing feelings, empathy, motivation and social skills. These five basic elements are practised regularly once or twice a week, with increasing concentration over the years (Irisdotter Aldenmyr, 2012). This programme is used by the teachers Ava, Bill, Dolly and Eric.

- *Dare to Be.* A work manual developed by a working group inspired by a therapist in psychosynthesis (cf. Söderberg, 2006). This programme has clear connections to both SET (see above) and the communication theory of non-violent communication. The exercises in the work manual are structured around the four key concepts of safety, emotions, roles and needs. Activities from this work manual took place in the students' schedule every week (Irisdotter Aldenmyr & Grönlien Zetterqvist, 2013). This working manual is used by the teachers Frederic, Gary and Harriet.
- *The Dream of the Good.* A mindfulness-oriented programme developed by a psychologist and used systematically several times a week to raise the students' mental well-being, sense of harmony and concentration (cf. Terjestam, 2010). This concept includes the four activities of yoga, stillness (12 minutes of meditation while listening to a CD with a female voice talking about a walk in the mountains), life conversations (conversations in smaller groups around a certain topic presented by the teacher) and massage (where the students give each other back massage under the instructions of a teacher), all of which took place in the students' schedule every week (Grönlien Zetterqvist, 2014). This programme is used by the teachers Iris and Jill.
- *A collection of various work materials.* These work materials consist of societal issues for discussion, parts of TV programmes or movies which raise moral or relational questions, and work sheets collected from various materials where relations to others, self-knowledge and moral dilemmas or controversial issues are in focus. Caleb is the only teacher interviewed who chooses to work with his own collection of work materials within LCE.

It is important to stress that we have no intention to compare in what way the various descriptions of each teacher are consistent with other things they say. Contradictions and paradoxes are common in long interviews, and our aim in the present study is mainly to highlight the positions and interpretations *available* to the teachers, not to categorize them individually into distinctive types. Put briefly, we take our point of departure in the notion that the LCE teachers descriptions are part of larger discourses about therapeutic education, and that these discourses contribute to constructing conditions of possibility for young people's futures, here depicted in terms of their transition processes from life in school to life in society.

   Our approach to the concept of 'discourse' includes what is said through speech or written text, but it is more than this. A discourse denotes not only the signs of

language but the whole formation of a group of statements, which is not limited to what is being said (Foucault, 1972). In relation to the teachers' constructions of youth transitional spaces from school to society through their descriptions of LCE, discourses are seen as being constituted *through* these statements, which emerge as possibilities at a particular time and location. In addition, these statements are considered as entities that allow for the creation of specific and repeatable relations to objects, to subjects and to other statements.

Teachers on therapeutic education—three discourses

The teacher interviews include a wide range of expressions of descriptions and purposes for therapeutic teaching, which are provided and analysed below. The phenomenon of therapeutic education comes from notions of positive psychology and from a widespread apprehension of a fragile childhood, a dangerous society and a vulnerable youth generation. These notions are reinforced by a psychologically oriented discourse of youth transition, which is also—as presented below—strong among the Swedish LCE teachers' descriptions (cf. Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014). However, there are also other discourses identified through the teacher descriptions of their teaching practice of LCE that stand out as being more related to the professional role of the teacher; a traditional role model discourse, in which the teacher emerges as a moral authority; and an ethical discourse of care in which the teacher emerges as a 'fellow' human being with ethical responsiveness towards the student.

A psychological discourse of well-being and the threats of contemporary society

Six of the 10 teachers express lines of arguments and purposes of LCE that relate to contemporary notions of the need for therapeutic intervention. Some of these teachers draw attention to the surrounding society and resources schools need to deal with. These meta-reflections, especially those formulated by Bill, are in line with the deconstruction of the notions of children at risk in terms of vulnerability and victimhood (cf. Löf, 2011; Brunila & Rossi, 2017).

Bill takes as his point of departure today's society; without a further definition of what kind of society he refers to, he suggests that schools ought to be understood as something 'wider … it seems reasonable in today's society. … I'm sure it is cheaper too' (B7). By referring to supposed economic gains, Bill uses a kind of market-oriented logic that expresses a suggested correlation between people's mental health and the prosperity of the country (cf. Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2009).

Iris formulates a similar concern when she talks about the stressful world that children today are growing up in. She feels that the pressure is increasing and there is no time to reflect and take it easy.

These reflections on today's society all end up in the increased need for therapeutic or fostering input from teachers. LCE is put forward by both Bill and Iris as something helpful and potentially fruitful in relation to the needs and circumstances of today. Eric formulates an explanation in which he tries to place LCE as a phenomenon in a larger context. While doing so, he recognizes the discourses of a society where children are put at risk, although he dismisses LCE as a solution.

> I think one tries to find simple solutions to a societal problem. We have problems in school with order and discipline, with bullying. … And … well, you are supposed to do something. The politicians want to show how good they are. So they introduce a new subject. … 'Look how good we are, we have Life Competence Education! Now, no one can say that we aren't doing anything to prevent bullying' … and that is why they don't dare to evaluate this because I think it would be much criticized.

Harriet wants to promote what she defines as 'human development' and Frederic also formulates 'the personal development of the student' as a goal. In addition to this, Frederic mentions the importance of 'knowing oneself and others' in order to reach well-being. A similar approach is expressed by Iris, who wants her students to 'find themselves' in order to feel good. Jill sees LCE as an opportunity to teach the student how to relax and unwind. These types of aim relate in a wide sense to the contemporary idea of the importance of promoting emotional as well as mental well-being. Seeing children and young people as being in an emotionally risky situation is especially elaborated in relation to the students' situation at school. Achieving academically is important, and, since the pressure of education is high, school ought not just to help students to reach their potential academically but also to compensate for the emotional and mental harm this may cause.

Ava expresses the importance of getting to know yourself, but her underlying motive is 'to be able to learn'. This connection between well-being and school results is also formulated by Caleb, who says that a better working atmosphere is an important result of LCE. Bill also identifies academic goals as an underlying motive for LCE when he says that 'seeing the students also shows that I have expectations of them'. An ambition to promote well-being is connected here to a discourse of measurable achievement and competition.

LCE as a therapeutically oriented activity with desirable academic side effects is further developed by Ava. She describes LCE as a platform for her as a teacher to encourage pupils, to give them feedback and to motivate them to study. Iris also mentions LCE as an opportunity to 'get information that helps the teacher to evaluate and grade the achievements of the student'. This statement, and the other descriptions that express the values of LCE in terms of positive side effects, can be criticized as a way of manipulating and controlling students in the name of well-being (cf. Gillies, 2011).

Altogether, the types of statements gathered here confirm a picture of the teachers taking therapeutic responsibility for their students. This responsibility is connected to the well-being of the students in a general sense, but mainly seems to be an expression of the school *compensating* for the competitive, result-oriented context of an educational market (cf. Brunila, 2012, 2014). The competitive school agenda needs to be combined with a therapeutic, caring discourse in order to be successful and acceptable on the market (cf. McCuaig, 2012; Brunila et al., 2016).

A common line of thought within a therapeutic rationale is that someone (the teacher) leads someone else (the student) towards a better (more secure) state of mind by using the tools of therapeutic intervention. Knowledge about psychology as well as effective strategies are crucial in this therapeutic line of thought. These notions are underpinned by a discourse of psychological research results and the descriptions formulated within the intervention programmes and manuals. And they point towards a widespread well-being crisis among the young (cf. Kimber, 2009; House & Loewenthal, 2009).

A moral role model discourse

LCE is also described by the teachers as a fostering project in a more traditional and moral sense; the adult and professional person has something to teach the younger person and may figure as a role model in ways of behaving and following rules and norms. This discourse, as the therapeutic, psychological discourse of risk above, is built on hierarchal relations between teachers and students. However, it does not refer to a crisis of well-being or special therapeutic needs (cf. Irisdotter Aldenmyr, 2006; Hargreaves, 1995) and is practised by five of the 10 teachers.

Caleb talks about a society where children are spoiled by their parents, less disciplined and stressed by their use of computers, computer games and television. All these kinds of input, together with a generation of inadequate parents, make children feel unbalanced. Caleb is concerned about the attitudes and language use of today's children. These concerns involve notions of a childhood in crisis, although Caleb's concerns are not mainly about the emotional well-being of the students but about their behaviour and norms. He expresses the aim to 'learn how to treat each other right'. Harriet is more specific when she states that LCE is an opportunity to 'prevent racial and homophobic tendencies'.

Jill describes LCE as an opportunity for students to 'learn what it is to be a person, and to know what you stand for'. She also states that the activities in LCE are about 'concrete things that we don't have room for within the other subjects' and she sums it up by using the phrase 'all-round education'. The normative, moral fostering aspects of LCE emerge when Jill claims that it is about 'learning how to treat others'. Frederic expresses a similar line of thought as Jill when he suggests that LCE is about 'knowledge about things that the subjects

do not cover, like for example the ethics of the web'. These knowledge-based acts of fostering are also present in the words expressed by Gary when he states that LCE is about 'meeting the opinions of others'. His own role as a teacher is 'to be a role model, to take a stand'. In these expressions, LCE is likened to other subjects, although it handles issues that are not covered by the established school subjects. As in any other subject, the focus is on a particular content and not on the individual's emotional state. Treating LCE as an additional subject rather than as an approach or dimension on its own may be in line with a traditional moral education based on discipline and order (cf. Landahl, 2006) or connected to a line of thought that, as mentioned above, is provoked and elicited through children's emotional responses in moral (Aristotelian) ways (Cigman, 2012, p. 456).

Describing the practice of LCE in these rather traditional ways, making it less notable when it is likened to other subjects, could be one way of resisting ideas of a crisis of well-being among young students, or the dominance of therapeutic features, not only in school but also in contemporary society. The teachers avoid taking on the role of therapists when they describe their use of psychological intervention programmes as working with just another subject content. Instead, they extend their role as teachers in certain subjects and include a moral fostering aspect that is well anchored in a traditional school-teacher norm-oriented role.

An ethical discourse of care

Another discourse emerges where the teachers emphasize their responsibility to guide, correct or intervene with the personal and emotional aspects of their students' lives: a frame of reference in which the responsibility of caring resonates with an ethical value base rather than a psychological or moral one. This discourse reveals one particular quality that distinguishes it from both the discourse of contemporary therapeutic needs underpinned by psychological features and a more traditional role model discourse. This comes to the fore in that the project of LCE is *not* described in hierarchal terms, where someone leads someone else towards a certain emotional state or a proper way of behaving, but in terms of mutuality and humility as valuable ethical qualities in human encounters that the school offers space for.

Three of the teachers formulated the characteristics of LCE in ways that to some extent could be interpreted as part of a discourse of psychological needs, as in the above. However, one crucial difference is that, in rather prominent ways, the teachers *include* themselves as equal fellow human beings in the caring project. They are participants without being in a clearly hierarchal position towards the students. In that sense, these descriptions produce qualities other than the other two discourses. A quality of caring seems to relate to an overall act of *compassion* rather than attending to the urgent and contemporary

therapeutic need of students in a competitive school environment, or to 'moral awakening' through teacher efforts.

Iris's descriptions were included in a therapeutically oriented interpretation above. However, the scale is a sloping one, and some of her descriptions may also be understood as holistic approaches of caring both for her students and for herself. She states that LCE provides space to 'take care of the complexity of being a human being, and to do so in a professional way'. Iris makes connections between her meta-reflection on what it is to be a teacher and her activities during LCE:

> … it brings us back to the question why we became teachers. Did I become a teacher in order to say 'grammar is done, what have you learnt?, let's have a test, check', or do you want something more? If you want something more, the strict squares [provided by school as an institution] will limit you. Because you cannot entirely grasp or tell what happens in the classroom during Life Conversation [an activity included in LCE]. … To be a human being is so much more complex than school with its squares. … If we [teachers] cannot handle it without being therapists, what are we then?

Iris's final formulations may imply that teachers ought to handle the complexity of life in order to legitimize their role as teachers. It also seems important to Iris that this is not done by acting as a therapist. Iris seems to mark out the territory for teachers, to deal with the existential dimensions of life together with students but without stepping into another profession, the profession of a therapist. To care is part of being a professional teacher.

Ava also expresses meta-reflections that seem to connect to a genuine will to develop and improve school as an institution. The underlying aim seems to be to increase school's readiness to care for students, when it comes to both relational and academic matters. Ava says that teachers need to find new ways of looking at students 'since my way of looking at and thinking about students, my expectations affect them'.

Ava explains how LCE may be used as an extra opportunity to develop a good approach towards her students. She also sees LCE as a chance to talk with students and give them space. Ava does not primarily seem to think of LCE as a discrete activity on the schedule but rather as an approach. This line of thought is further developed by Bill, who suggests that LCE 'is an approach, and it is about being yourself as a teacher'. This in turn makes 'the student feel noticed, and safe'. Bill states that 'LCE is an approach for all human encounters'. These approaches may be in line with the ideas of Hansen (2007), speaking about a moral attentiveness towards students as a constant quality in every educational meeting. This kind of moral attentiveness does not seem to be built on hierarchal positions between teachers and students but is rather formulated as the relational core of every meeting that may lead to anyone learning anything.

Effects of the discourses for youth transition processes from school to society

The three discourses that emerge through the teachers' descriptions of their therapeutic teaching (LCE) practice both affirm and point away from the therapeutic trend in society—education included—and its related notions of a well-being crisis among the young. What is in question in this chapter is their constitutive power not only to shape teachers' professional approaches to therapeutic teaching practices but also to give body to and regulate the actualization and direction-taking of (different notions of) young people's transition from school to society. Out of the three discourses identified: a psychological 'risk' discourse, a role model discourse and an ethical discourse of care, different feasible effects for these transition processes can be drawn upon, which are sketched below.

The psychological risk discourse calls a dangerous transition from school to society into being where the school's (and teachers') task is to protect the young students and enable them to handle the current challenges in society. One critical step in the transition involves the transgressing of the delicate and at the same time risky line between being a vulnerable child and being a capable adult, which can be seen as a characteristic feature of the historically established depiction of (the Swedish) school (Olson, 2009). This step makes young people's self-empowerment in emotional and psychological senses a vibrant condition for success in the transition process; self-empowerment where the teachers' insights into emotional matters, and openness about them, is of vital importance for the student to 'achieve' and 'work through' in order to succeed in feeling good about themselves and their life in society. What is at stake is that this psychological risk discourse marks out a world that is characterized by dangerous influences and fast change. Their success in the transition from school to society stands out as dependent on their emotional and self-empowerment. In order to (self-)manage to live a healthy life with many well-being qualities 'out there' in society, the young have to work on their bodies and souls in the (often manual-based) ways the teachers prescribe in school. If not, they run the risk of falling victim to the hazards of society.

Regarding the role model discourse, the transition process from school to society is not, as is the case in the psychological risk discourse, self-empowerment and self-esteem that stand out as central hubs. It is rather a matter of rule-following and good behaviour that produces success; young people should learn to crack the norm codes to adulthood and to society. Once they have done that, they will have a 'better' and more harmonious life in society. The role of the schools, and particularly the teachers, in this discourse is to prepare them for this transition, and the preparation stands out as a moral one. In the teachers' professional teaching, they serve as role models. In showing the young students how to behave, act and think as norm-oriented social beings, they

can progress from deficient beings to become well-behaved adults by following the right rules and norms. Here the responsibility mainly rests on the school and the (LCE) teachers to see to a successful transition process from school to society for the young. The success depends to a considerable extent on the capacity of the teacher to embody a decent qualification for being a role model for the students.

The third discourse, the ethical one, also stands out as being part of a professional orientation, as does the role model discourse. Here the transition from school to society for the young students is actualized in ethical ways; the key process involved is the transition from the state of being a child in need of ethical care to become an ethically cultivated person. The very notion of ethical cultivation does not stand out as being directly entwined with psychological development in the teachers' descriptions, which distinguishes it from the role model discourse. Cultivation rather emerges as a reciprocal process through which both the teachers and the students 'refine' their ethical being and approach to other people and society through mutual interaction in words and behaviour. Society itself is not central to this ethical transition process in the way that is the case in the two former discourses; it is almost totally absent. Transition from school to society thus becomes a relational 'business' that takes place, and at the same time is conditioned by, interaction mainly between teachers and students in school.

Similar to the psychological approach, the young have to achieve their own empowerment. However, this empowerment is an ethical one, and is accomplished by teachers. As in the role model discourse, the transition process lies in the teachers' professional role rather than in the students' actions. Being quite firmly related to the school context, the ethical discourse of care, affirming the professional role of the teacher as an ethical promoter, is not as sensitive to ideas about 'children of today' and their lack of emotional well-being as are the other two discourses.

Taken together, the three discourses on therapeutic (LCE) teaching in Swedish compulsory school that emerge in the teachers' descriptions have different effects for youth transition processes from school to society. If we compare the youth transition processes sketched above, two differences between them stand out as central: first, that the last two discourses—the role model discourse and the ethical discourse of care—are linked with traditional professional notions of school as fostering young students, while the first one—the psychological risk discourse—is not. Second, that the first two affirm a hierarchical discourse as regards the relationship between the teachers and the students, while the last stands out as non-hierarchical. That is, the ethical discourse of care involves a notion of this relationship where the young students are not targeted as lacking, victims to an unruly world or in need of (self-)empowerment beyond other people's (here: the teacher's) responsiveness and professional involvement in the very transition process.

These two differences, we argue, highlight two concerns. First, we emphasize the necessity for (educational) researchers *not* to take on therapeutic LCE arguments in their research on teachers and/or teaching. If researchers do that—in order to guide teachers in their professional everyday teaching practice—the therapeutic culture and its psy-discourses are 'inserted' into the teachers' professional, context-sensitive and practice-related judgements in a hazardous way. Put bluntly, if therapeutic psychological culture becomes 'mainstreamed' as part of teachers' professional didactical practices, it makes it difficult to separate psychological/therapeutic (research) concerns from educational ones. Even though we can never 'escape' or exist independently outside the therapeutic trend in education, there are constitutive processes involved that reinforce and create *other* discourses in therapeutic teaching than the psychological, hierarchical one. Second, there is a need for research that strengthens the very relationship between (teacher) discourses on therapeutic education and the discursive outcomes that they produce regarding young people's futures and lives. In terms of youth transitions from school to adult society, this is so, we argue, as these discourses contribute to the construction of the regulation and direction setting for the transition processes themselves, but also of (the role of) school and society, as well as of the young themselves. This construction is far from unique or new. Nonetheless, it seems to have taken new directions with the international phenomenon of therapeutic education, which calls for more exploratory *empirical* research on the relationship between therapeutic teaching and its effects on young people's futures.

Notes

[1] The term life competence education is first suggested by Camilla Löf (2009), as a translation of the Swedish concept *livskunskap*.

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Silences and Challenges

Lisbeth Lundahl and Kristiina Brunila

In this final section, we want to briefly discuss some aspects from the seven chapters of this book, in particular what they tell us about important points, missing or underdeveloped perspectives and challenges regarding transition policies and research on young people's transitions and agency at a time of rapid social and economic transformation. We believe that the contributions are well placed to make contributions to new, critical research, as they depart from different theoretical, methodological and actor perspectives and thus look at the transition landscape from various viewpoints.

The contributions by Tero Järvinen (Chapter 2) and Johanna Rosa Arnardottir (Chapter 3) build on large datasets that enable longitudinal comparisons, including over the years of the deep economic recession from 2008 to 2010. They both address the trajectories of NEETs—young people and young adults who are not in employment, education or training, and, importantly, their analyses nuance the picture of the vulnerability of this group. Comparisons, across time and across countries, of school-to-work transitions help to increase knowledge about what shapes youth conditions and may complement critical qualitative analyses in this field. While international comparisons of NEET rates have become common over the last decade, other aspects of young people's transitions are more difficult to compare, because of the different constructions of post-compulsory education and training, different definitions of unemployment and weak connections to the labour market etc. (Albaek et al., 2015).

It is worth remembering that most of the contributions focus on the educational part of the transitions space, and they commonly bring up educational reasons, as well as remedies, for problematic career trajectories. This to large extent reflects the disciplinary background of the researchers. However, there has been a more general tendency in the last 30–40 years to find educational solutions to transition problems than measures related to structural and particularly labour market factors. Expressed differently, the 'transition machinery' (see also Chapter 7, by Kristiina Brunila and colleagues) departs from an 'education logic' rather than an 'employment logic' (Iannelli & Raffe, 2007).[1] There is a marked risk that this emphasis may serve to obscure some of the basic problems relating to young people's career paths. On the one hand, there are a decreasing number of jobs that earlier served as door openers to the labour market for unexperienced youth without upper secondary qualifications. On the other hand, there is increasing unwillingness by employers to accept such jobseekers, even if the tasks technically do not require upper secondary education. The employers limit access to such jobs by demanding 'soft skills', for example having work discipline, the right attitudes, personality and appearance (Centeno & Stewart, 2013; Dafou, 2009; Nickson et al., 2012).

We however want to point out the importance of offering generous opportunities for adult education, so-called second-chance education to those who did not complete lower and upper secondary education. For example, Nordlund, Stehlik and Strandh (2013), in their study of Swedish second-chance education, conclude that it effectively improves the future labour market and economic prospects of people with few educational qualifications. The crucial role of this part of the education system is also briefly highlighted both in Chapter 2, by Järvinen, and in Chapter 4, by Lindblad and Lundahl, respectively, but, more generally, it is surprisingly little researched.

Another important question, pointed out by Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours (Chapter 6), concerns the scarcity of research on local transition policies. They focus on the UK case, showing its complexity. In highly decentralized welfare and education systems, such as Sweden and Finland, research on the local opportunity landscape is particularly important (see also Jacobsson, Hollertz & Garsten, 2017; Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014). Yet, youth research has often focused on young people in the cities, and the urban environment has been taken for granted. Young people's problems and social exclusion are described as urban phenomena, for example in terms of segregation, unemployment, drug abuse and criminality. However, many of these problems, e.g. high unemployment rates, tend to be larger in smaller municipalities outside the urban regions (Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014). Particularly in rural areas, young people feel left aside, not participating in society. They also tend to distrust central state politics and administration to a higher extent than urban youth (Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2010). We share Farrugia's (2014) conclusion that it is essential to conduct empirical studies of rural young people in order to make visible and better understand the spatial aspect of young people's careers, even theoretically.

The contributions by Michael Lindblad and Lisbeth Lundahl (Chapter 4) and Ameera Masoud, Tuuli Kurki and Kristiina Brunila (Chapter 5) highlight the preconditions for youth and young adults with a migrant background, to complete upper secondary education and construct a future career. Such issues have become increasingly urgent over time, not least during and after the latest large refugee wave in the mid-2010s. There is a prevailing strong tendency to depict migrant youth as problematic, but Chapters 4 and 5 both point to the strengths and potentials of having a history and perhaps own experiences of other cultures and migration—if one would recognize them. However, Chapters 4 and 5 also illustrate institutional inertia, lacking knowledge and prejudice in the encounter with the young persons concerned.

Chapter 7, by Kristiina Brunila, Katariina Mertanen and Sari Mononen Batista Costa, describes how transition policies and machineries tend to focus on the 'vulnerable'—labelled as NEETs, dropouts, early school leavers, refugees and the like. Here it is essential to remember that the young people seldom see themselves as victims and vulnerable but rather as the architects of their own lives (for example see Lundahl et al., 2017; de Graaf & van Zenderen, 2013). This may be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, one may see this as an expression of a general tendency to individualize problems and responsibilities, which also means that young people blame themselves for failures that result from structural and institutional factors, and from actors, such as parents, teachers and decision makers, who are more powerful than the young persons in the transition field. On the other hand, it is important to recognize young people's agency and optimism regarding their future options as an important source of empowerment and change. It is also important to recognize that professional approaches to young people may differ considerably, and hence enable their agency to varying extents. Sara Irisdotter Aldenmyr's and Maria Olson's analysis in Chapter 8 on teachers' psychological, role model and ethical discourses in life competence education helpfully illustrates this.

Although large parts of the school-to-work transition research focuses on 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' youth, Chapter 1, by Maria Rönnlund, takes a more original route and examines how middle-class, high-attaining students in upper secondary education look upon and try to influence life in school. Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours in Chapter 6 analyse local policies addressing 'middle attainers' in English post-compulsory education. More generally, we see a need for transitions research to widen its scope in order to get a deeper, more nuanced knowledge and understanding of how young people proceed through school and after, and hence get a less stigmatizing and psychologizing picture of large groups of young persons than has become frequent today.

The majority of contributions in this book concern youth transitions in the Nordic countries. These countries have been assumed to offer relatively strong, universal support to young people when leaving school and trying to establish themselves in work and adult life (see also Walther, 2006). However, in the last 20 years Nordic transition policies have imported neo-liberal features, including

so-called activation policies that entail reduced social support and increased individual responsibility for successful transitions (Kvist & Greve, 2011; Newman, 2007). In addition, decentralization, and choice and market reforms in education have resulted in a changed school landscape that increasingly segregates students along social class and ethnic lines (Bunar & Ambrose, 2016; Bjordal, 2016; Kosunen et al., 2016). The 'transition machinery' tends to ignore problems that young people experience as related to societal, economic and political turns and differences, and instead positions the difficulties within the individual. It is for example telling that Swedish local decision makers in a national survey ranked young people's lack of motivation as the single most important reason behind incomplete upper secondary education (Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014). Life-course interviews with young adults, however, clearly show how long-established processes with many interacting factors are responsible for school failure (Lundahl et al., 2017).

The outcomes therefore point to the need of more societal, cross-cultural and intersectional analysis of youth transitions, considering ethnicity/race, gender, social class, health and disability. Since the young people are not always able to navigate the changing school and labour markets, the practices of transition machinery are often of little use and even problematic when the problems young people experience are for example racialized and gendered but still considered the problems of individuals.

A number of researchers and policymakers across the world are referring to a major crisis in education, arguing that it is failing to produce the outcomes it should produce. In terms of young people in transition, we ought to ask what this means, and not least because of equity and fairness.

We locate this crisis as taking place within the economic rationality enabling non-educational and depoliticized ways of thinking about young people's transition towards employability. The role of education and other support systems offered to young people seem to be shifting from knowledge-based activities towards the development of specific character, skills, competences and types of emotion, with a highly personally tailored precision education model (Williamson, 2017; Brunila et al., 2019). In precision education the focus on creating a specific type of ideal learning subjectivity tends to work by ignoring political, economic, societal, cultural and structural aspects. The model puts youth on the move again. As an outcome of the economic rationality, it requires young people to submit to their individually understood vulnerabilities, and a lack of socio-economic activity becomes an indicator of personal deficiency. Alongside private companies and marketization, precision education includes a wide variety of disciplines, such as psychology, neurobiology, evolutionary biology, paediatrics and behavioural genetics, forming new networks of governance in order to tailor education and other support systems towards individually defined needs.

The current economy-driven rationality has the potential to offer more efficient governance through various opportunities for more tailored and individualized human engineering. This type of governance cultivates policies and practices for young people to become flexible, learnable, manageable and

suitably resilient: someone who is easily governable, someone who knows their place, and makes realistic plans to achieve them. However, it could be understood, following Lauren Berlant (2011), as a slow death, the physical wearing out of a population under economic and capitalist regimes of structural subordination and governance.

Notes

[1] Iannelli and Raffe (2007) used these concepts to characterize the orientation of vocational education and training in different countries.

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The book addresses one of the most urgent social problems in many countries, the uncertain school-to-work transitions of young people. As a result, a 'transition machinery' has been created, consisting of various education and training measures realised by e.g. teachers and youth workers.

The volume demonstrates that discourses related to youth transitions do not simply *describe* young adults but *create* them. For example, young people are expected to be active citizens who make themselves attractive to employers, and those who fail in doing so may be labelled having psychological deficiencies. When failing transitions, resulting in lack of higher education or unemployment, are treated as individual's problems rather than rising from structural factors, the solutions are likewise individualized. The book thus underlines the importance of analysing power relations reflected by gender, health, social class, and ethnicity.

The articles of the book combine perspectives from young people, policymakers, teachers, and youth workers in Iceland, Finland, Sweden, and England.

The editors of the book are **Kristiina Brunila**, professor of social justice and equality in education at University of Helsinki, and **Lisbeth Lundahl**, professor of educational work at Umeå University.