

BECOMING ADULT

Researching young migrants' uncertain futures

Constructing Viable Futures: Unaccompanied Migrant Young People Transitioning to 'Adulthood'

Oxford, 12 December 2017

www.becomingadult.net

@Becoming_Adult

#ESRCBecomingAdult



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



**BECOMING
ADULT**

The project

Conceptions of Futures and Wellbeing among Unaccompanied Migrant Young People

www.becomingadult.net

@Becoming_Adult

#ESRCBecomingAdult



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



1. How young people understand and experience 'wellbeing'; 'futures' and 'becoming adult'

- *Biographical narrative interviews*
- *Participatory approach: the team; photography; drama; comedy; music; animation*

2. Cultural conceptions of 'wellbeing'; 'futures' and 'becoming adult'

- *Analysis of different cultural media in countries of origin*

3. Policy ideas about 'wellbeing'; 'futures' and 'becoming adult'

- *Analysis of policies; interviews with national and local stakeholders; freedom of information request*

4. Grant-linked studentship

- *Comparative work UK & Italy*

Four countries of origin: Afghanistan; Albania; Eritrea; Vietnam (Wider range of countries of origin – Italy component)

- Protecting the ‘best interests’ of the child in transition to adulthood (no. 3)
- Transitions into institutional adulthood (no.4)
- Health and wellbeing (no. 5)
- Understanding causes and consequences of going ‘missing’ (no. 6)
- Forced returns and protracted displacement (no. 7)
- Unaccompanied minors and secondary migration between Italy and the UK (no. 8)

BECOMING ADULT

Research Team

Elaine chase Nando Sigona Dawn Chatty
Francesca Meloni Rachel Humprhis Jenny Allsopp

Khadija Abassi Tamsin Barber David Bozzini
Nicola Mai Alessandro Monsutti
Hai Nguyen Semia Tecle

Raymon Fshaye Maranata Geday Elona Gega
Klesti Gorce Semhar Haile Shafiq Hussaini
Elvis Laci Migena Lala Daniel Muhr Habib
Rezaie Yusif Tahiru Winta Teddy Gul Zada
Mohammed Zameree



BECOMING ADULT

Partners & Advisors



PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS



NPCE
NEWHAM PARTNERSHIP FOR COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATION



Advisory Group

Synnove Bendixsen Judith Dennis Ilse Derluyn
Nadine Finch Catherine Gladwell
Roberto Gonzales Lilana Keith Ravi Kohli
Adrian Matthews Virginia Morrow
Jenny Phillimore Ilona Pinter Liza Schuster
Jim Wade Charles Watters



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency



UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



BECOMING ADULT

Subjective Wellbeing, Transitions to Adulthood and Viable Futures

Elaine Chase, Nando Sigona, Francesca Meloni,
Jenny Allsopp, Rachel Humphris

12 December 2017



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



- Highly successful transitions at 18 +
- Young people doing 'fine' after struggle
- Protracted waiting (many years)
- Age disputed -> adult services and precarious status
- Disengage from services and become 'invisible'
- Migrate to avoid forced removal (e.g to Italy)
- Forced removal to Afghanistan → remigration
- Not 'deportable' but no recourse to public funds

BECOMING ADULT

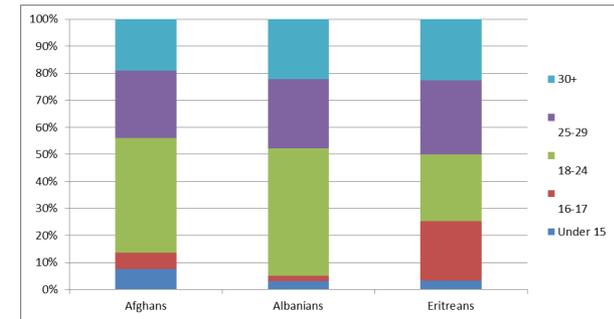
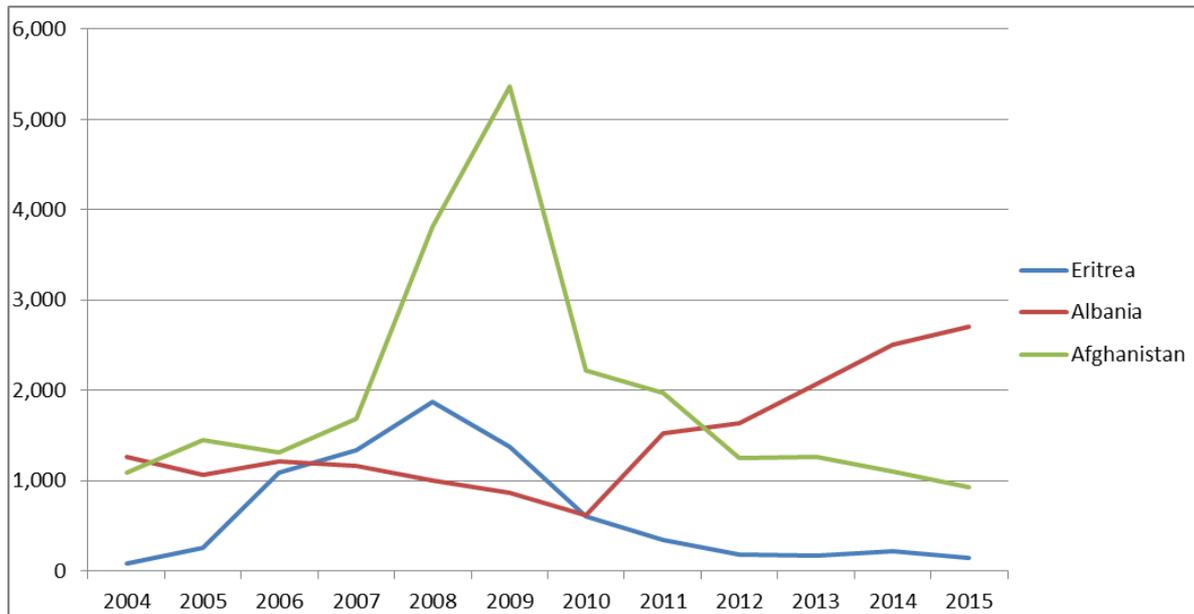
Why different outcomes?

- Country of origin
- The journey and port of entry
- Access to and quality of legal representation
- Local authority where placed
- How different services work together ('best interests' or not)
- How perceived by others e.g 'believed' / 'not believed'
- Whether or not age disputed
- Access to informal as well as formal support
- SERENDIPITY !

- **Albania and Afghanistan** - 'safe' countries; forced removals
- **Eritrea**: asylum claims often accepted
- **Afghanistan**: forced returned to Afghanistan or 'go missing', remigration
- **Albania**: lack of recognition of specific forms of persecution; refused asylum, transition into 'illegality', illegality and risks of homelessness, destitution and poor mental health
- **Vietnam**: Difficulties in access for research; more likely to be referred to National Referral Mechanism (NRM) 'trafficking'

BECOMING ADULT

Forced and voluntary removal



BECOMING ADULT

Institutional transitions at 18

- Mixed transitions of 'leaving care' at 18
- Some examples of excellent care and support through this transition
- Often rapid reduction in social care support
- Different practices across and within local authorities
- Some young people make rational decisions to disengage from statutory services at 18 because they fear detention and forced removal
- For young people who are appeal rights exhausted, transition to adulthood can mean having to survive through illegal means

BECOMING ADULT



Life as an adult is like walking a tightrope and trying not to fall down. It doesn't feel easy for an adult to make his future life on his own. So he is holding tightly onto the tightrope to try to keep his way on balance.

Ibrahim

- Health and wellbeing fundamentally determined by legal status
- Difficulties increase on turning '18'
- Belonging and becoming: self transformation and social ties within UK –(often ignored in policy and practice)
- Positive impact of education and training- but often curtailed opportunities
- Frequent mental health problems due to: previous trauma; asylum and immigration processes; illegality
- Impact on health of protracted displacement and uncertainty
- Impact of mental stress and anxiety on physical health
- Transformative impact of gaining legal status

- Young people core members of the research team
 - Generates particular rhythm and momentum
 - Process of negotiating and learning
- Multiple methods to facilitate engagement in research
 - Art work, drama, comedy, photography, music
- Complex process of personal positioning and relationships
- Enriches the process of learning and creativity in sharing findings

We want to challenge the often sensationalised discourses around migration which often lead to an essentialised characterisation of migrant communities. Therefore our purpose is also to highlight the role of migrant communities as active agents of change demonstrated through various contributions ranging from arts, literature, enterprise or human capital... Through this platform we aim to express our individuality and show the multifacetedness of migration by expressing our unique experiences, interests, and the weird and wonderful things that we enjoy doing.

[\(https://thewellwishers.wordpress.com/about/\)](https://thewellwishers.wordpress.com/about/)

- Young people arriving on their own in the UK experience multiple transitions at 18 (and beyond)
- Legal status at 18 is the main (but not the only) determinant of young people's outcomes
- Transition into adulthood is often a transition into illegality
- Transition to adulthood can mean reduced wellbeing & increased vulnerability
- Need to respond better to the complex needs of these young people at different levels (policy; legal; social; psychological)
- Contribution of the research:
 - Understanding the complexities of transition at 18 for unaccompanied migrant young people
 - Methodological learning and insights from participatory approaches to research

BECOMING ADULT

Project outputs

- www.becomingadult.net
- www.thewellwishers.wordpress.com
- Research briefs (different dimensions of project)
- Conference summary and implications: 'Walking a tightrope'
- Reports: Cultural conceptions of migration, wellbeing, futures and becoming 'adult'
- Walking a tightrope – photography booklet
- Art booklets: Project Leicester; Project Maxxi Rome
- Project Song 'Becoming Adult in another man's world'
- Comedy sketches
- Journal articles

Forthcoming:

- Authored volume – Wellbeing in Transition (Policy Press)
- Edited volume – 'Becoming Adult on the move' (OUP)
- Animation and comics (Positive/Negatives/ Why Comics?) – Educational resources

Next steps?

- We have learned much more about possible outcomes for unaccompanied young people becoming 'adult' –
 - **where should the research, policy and practice agenda takes us now?**