

The Governance of Missing Asylum-Seekers in Sweden

Managing "Missingness" Through Different Technologies of Power

Anna Hammarstedt



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Abstract

For a highly controlled and comprehensive welfare state such as Sweden, one can assume that incorporating populations into a system of bureaucratic management (and keeping them there) is paramount to its overall functioning. Either subjects are incorporated into the system and thereby managed, or subjects are expelled from the system and no longer managed. However, as the Swedish asylum regime has attempted to exert "control" over migration by tightening its asylum policies and practices, it has also admitted that stricter asylum policies and practices will lead to more asylum-seekers with failed claims going missing. Hence, the Swedish asylum regime appears to be paradoxically partaking in the (in)direct creation and facilitation of a space that I call *missingness*: a space of inbetweenness that disrupts the overall governing logic of being fully present or absent within a bureaucratic system. This thesis aims to examine the governance of missingness within the asylum regime in Sweden. Examining the discourses produced through interviews with state employees who manage the asylum-seeking process, it explores how state employees at three key institutions struggle to deal with the uncertainty and ambiguity of missingness. By adopting a Foucauldian perspective on power, the governance of missingness is analyzed in relation to different technologies of power. This thesis finds that different states of missingness are governed in a multitude of ways, through technologies of disciplinary power, biopower, and pastoral power.

Keywords: *missingness, Swedish asylum regime, asylum-seekers, Foucault, technologies of power.*

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To my brother.

Acknowledgements

I've been putting off writing these acknowledgements for a very long time. As I sit in my recently cleaned apartment, with the dishes washed, the laundry folded, having answered every single lingering text message and e-mail that I could possibly find, watched a depressing documentary on the politics of greedy private housing companies in the Stockholm suburbs, and tried to find a dress for a wedding in about eight months' time, I have run out of methods of procrastination. On this gray Saturday afternoon, with the deadline knife pushed against my throat (symbolically, of course), I have no other choice but to write this thing. I have been avoiding this, not due to ungratefulness, but due to the overwhelming emotions that rush over me when I think of the people in my life, in academia and outside of academia, who have helped me in every way possible during this rollercoaster of a journey. It is mind-boggling to me that most of them haven't always *had* to help me, but have *chosen* to help me, because they are incredible people that enjoy watching others learn, grow, succeed, and be happy. Some of them have helped in more ways than they will ever know, and just naming them here feels like it will not do justice to the amount of gratefulness and warmth that I feel in my heart when I think of them. That being said, I'll give it a shot...

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...

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Preface

Roughly five and a half years later and I am still able to describe her image as if it were one from my own personal stack of photographs at home, captured snapshots of those whom I hold near and dear. Blonde long hair parted in the middle, blue eyes staring straight into the camera, pale complexion, neutral smile, mouth closed, pearl earring on her left ear exposed to our gaze. As Jenny Edkins states, “[w]hile a photograph appears to record a moment that has inevitably passed, in itself, as a photograph, it is equally present. The eyes in the photograph still gaze determinedly direct at us, undaunted by the impossibility of this look.”¹ Although I have never met the subject of the photograph, I can reproduce what has become summarized as the common narrative of her life, as ingrained in the minds of most Swedes who watch, read, or listen to the news. The subject of the photograph is Lisa Holm, a 17-year-old Swedish girl who was reported missing on June 7, 2015, when she failed to return home that night after leaving the café where she worked near the town of Skövde. Her body was discovered five days later on a farmyard property, and there was evidence that she had been brutally murdered.²

The photograph is ingrained in my memory because of its mass reproduction through television sets and its eternalization through printed newspapers. It felt as if everywhere you turned that sleepy summer week, you were unable to escape her stare, as “[t]he photographs of the missing are a precious remnant, a proof that this person exists. This is a person, a missing person, they proclaim. Here is my sister, my husband, my son, my friend.”³ The search for Lisa Holm invoked a widespread community response, in a country famously stereotyped for its lack of community networks, with hundreds of people relentlessly and meticulously ransacking nearby fields in the hopes of finding her before her tragic fate was confirmed. At the time of her disappearance, I was working as a caseworker for the Swedish Migration Agency,⁴ registering asylum claims and conducting the first initial interview upon arrival in this country.⁵ I recall sitting at a desk while listening, with awkward fascination,

¹ Edkins 2007, 29.

² Forsberg 2015.

³ Edkins 2007, 29.

⁴ The Swedish Migration Agency is responsible for registering and processing asylum claims on behalf of the Swedish state.

⁵ To read more about what this experience can represent, please refer to a narrative piece I wrote about the meeting between a caseworker and an asylum-seeker (from the perspective of the caseworker) at a Swedish Application Unit. See: Hammarstedt 2017.

to the radio as they were reporting live from the search. *Smack*. The sound of a stack of blue folders hitting the desk, balanced beneath the hand of my team leader at the unit and a voice asking: “Could you close these cases? They’re unaccompanied minors who have applied for asylum and then disappeared.⁶ We don’t know where they are.”

The contrast was overwhelming: listening to a community in shreds over their missing Lisa, while the anonymous hundreds had their cases closed when they were administratively expelled from the system with the click of a mouse. The bureaucratic routines would often entail expelling the missing individual from our system, contradicting what is often portrayed in the literature as the notion of being under the state’s watchful eye. Often these folders contained no photographs of the individual, no proof that the person had existed and no confirmation that they continue to exist. Not present, no longer our responsibility. According to Judith Butler, we are always confronted with, and in this sense participating in, violent orderings that frame certain lives as worthy of mourning and others as not, creating a polarization of grievable and un-grievable lives.⁷ I therefore recall feeling an embarrassed naivety over my obsession with the question of “how can no one care where these kids have gone?” Yet looking back at that day, I now realize the complexity that needs to be unpacked, a complexity that perhaps goes beyond the politics of grievability and mourning.

With this stack of blue folders on the table in front of me, missingness in relation to those seeking asylum could no longer be written off as something that occurs “somewhere else.” Those seeking asylum often told me narratives of the traumatic ruptures of being separated from loved ones while fleeing to Sweden, of relatives now missing somewhere along the lines drawn on a map. Missingness could no longer be confined to this (problematically) normalized narrative, which assumes that wanting or needing to go missing is something that occurs before reaching one’s “final destination.” This narrative assumes that missingness belongs to a temporal and spatial past of *elsewhere*, such as within conflict zones on route to Europe, or within lesser-resourced European countries often scolded for their “barely functioning” asylum systems by richer-resourced European countries. The blue folders were proof that missingness, regardless of when and where it occurs in the process of seeking asylum, is inevitably entangled with, inseparable from, and a consequence of the asylum regime as a whole. It occurs at all sites where asylum policies and practices are performed. Yet as a caseworker, I was part of a system that was meant to be dealing bureaucratically with a population, a system equipped to register, and administer life. I did not feel equipped to deal with missingness, a state which often entailed that neither life nor death could be confirmed in the gaze of state institutions. Hence, I embarked upon writing this thesis, in

⁶ Note that, in this case, the term unaccompanied minors often refers to those under the age of 18 who are applying for asylum without the presence of a parent or legal guardian.

⁷ See: Butler 2006.

the hopes of reaching a conclusion beyond who disappears and who doesn't, who is allowed to disappear and who isn't, who wants to disappear and who doesn't – although these are important questions indeed – and instead I allowed myself to be immersed in the complexity and ambiguity I soon discovered missingness to be.

1. Introduction

...[B]efore the Law stands a door-keeper on guard. To this door-keeper there comes a man from the country who begs for admittance to the Law. But the door-keeper says that he cannot admit the man at the moment. The man, on reflection, asks if he will be allowed, then, to enter later. 'It is possible,' answers the door-keeper, 'but not at this moment.' Since the door leading into the Law stands open as usual and the door-keeper steps to one side, the man bends down to peer through the entrance. When the door-keeper sees that, he laughs and says: 'If you are so strongly tempted, try to get in without my permission. But note that I am powerful. And I am only the lowest door-keeper. From hall to hall, keepers stand at every door, one more powerful than the other. Even the third of these has an aspect that even I cannot bear to look at' ...he decides that he had better wait until he gets permission to enter. The door-keeper gives him a stool and lets him sit down at the side of the door. There he sits waiting for days and years. -Franz Kafka⁸

...[T]he people are those who, refusing to be the population, disrupt the system. -Michel Foucault⁹

The aim of this thesis is to examine the governance of missingness within the asylum regime in Sweden. By interviewing state employees who manage the asylum-seeking process and are employed to administer lives within this process, this thesis delves into how missingness and governance relate to one another. It thereby proposes the following question for inquiry: how is missingness governed within the Swedish asylum regime, and what does this tell us about different technologies of power involved in the governance of migration? When someone applies for asylum but then disappears at some point during the asylum-seeking process, state employees may wonder why that person has disappeared, where they might physically be, if they will come back, if they are even alive, and how to manage their case in the present and thereafter. Being missing is often equated with being undocumented, but there are many different factors beyond undocumentedness that can contribute to "(in)voluntary"¹⁰ disappearances. These include, for example, failed asylum

⁸ Kafka 2009, 197.

⁹ Foucault 2009, 44.

¹⁰ The terms voluntary, involuntary, and (in)voluntary are put in quotation marks throughout this thesis, as I acknowledge that the demarcation of these categories and their ascriptions to the missing subject is a power move in itself.

claims and their legal/political/social consequences, wanting/needing to seek asylum in another country after an (un)planned registration with migration authorities, wanting/needing to return to another country or to relocate to another part of Sweden for various reasons, misunderstandings with the authorities, and/or being exposed to human trafficking networks either before or after arrival in Sweden.¹¹ There are many ways to conceive of the “missing” in Sweden. Consequently, missingness as a term incorporates the ambiguity and uncertainty that surrounds a disappearance for state institutions, thereby calling into question how it can be governed.

Sweden is a credible case for studying how missingness is governed, as it can be considered a highly controlled and comprehensive welfare state¹² that functions through logics of incorporating one into a system of bureaucracy, entailing that you are either present or absent from this system. Missingness as a site of struggle for governance becomes especially striking in such a case, as it entails an inbetweenness for these logics, because the missing are at first glance neither fully present nor absent. In the media and by politicians, discourses are often produced in which asylum-seekers who have had their asylum claims denied, and subsequently reside in Sweden as undocumented, are often referred to as “hidden” (in Swedish: *gömda*), a term that, according to Erika Sigvardsson, is “reproducing the notion of ‘they’ never being visible among ‘us.’”¹³ Undocumented individuals in Sweden are officially rendered absent in the sense that there is no corresponding legal or socio-political presence alongside their physical presence.¹⁴ In being spoken for and about, missing asylum-seekers in Sweden are, paradoxically and simultaneously, also made present through the diverse humanitarian versus security agendas strategically ascribed to them. By focusing our attention on the state employees expected to manage missingness, the riddle of missingness and its multitude of trajectories begin to unfold.

The Swedish Migration Agency (SMA), the agency in charge of registering and processing asylum claims on behalf of the Swedish state, registered 43,473 asylum-seekers as absconding between 2015 and 2020.¹⁵ There are, for many reasons, no exact figures on how many *undocumented* migrants there are in Sweden.¹⁶ Some will be incorporated into the category of absconding (the official terminology used by the SMA to describe those initially missing), while others will not. As previously mentioned, the uncertainty that this entails

¹¹ These factors are summarized from my own experience working as a caseworker at the Swedish Migration Agency and the individuals whom I was in contact with.

¹² Hellgren 2014, 1179.

¹³ Sigvardsson 2013, 529.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 523.

¹⁵ However, the definitions that are used as a basis for these statistics will be analyzed in Chapter 5. These statistics were provided through email correspondence with the SMA’s Statistics and Analysis Department (see: Migrationsverket 2021b). To view these statistics, see: Appendix II.

¹⁶ Hellgren 2014, 1179.

for understanding the phenomenon of missingness is “particularly problematic for a highly controlled, comprehensive welfare state like Sweden.”¹⁷ In order to access most institutions in Sweden, for example, one needs to obtain a personal identity number,¹⁸ a controversial topic of debate for those who have moved to Sweden and run into many obstacles and bureaucratic hoops to jump through, before finally experiencing the official “rite of passage” (i.e., getting the final four numbers to complete one’s personal identity number). One can thus assume that a highly controlled and comprehensive welfare state functions through logics of incorporating one into a system of bureaucracy, entailing that the subject is either present or absent within this system. For a country such as Sweden, incorporating populations into a system of bureaucratic management appears to be paramount to the overall functioning of the welfare state.

Hence, there appears to be a system of bureaucracy in Sweden that functions through ordering logics of presence and absence, i.e., subjects are incorporated into the system and thereby managed, or subjects are expelled from the system and thereby no longer managed. Little space is left for anything in between. Ordering logics such as these can be seen as an attempt to securely place subjects into neat categories of management, as “[w]hat sovereign power cannot tolerate is the ambiguity of subjects.”¹⁹ However, when it comes to missing subjects, the state *also* appears to have its own hand in the production and/or existence of this ambiguity. For example, in February 2015, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child criticized Sweden for its lack of both action on and investigation into the disappearances of unaccompanied minors²⁰ seeking asylum within the country.²¹ Following this critique, the Region of Stockholm established a network of institutions and organizations regularly in contact with unaccompanied minors and developed a project plan, their goal of which was to increase efficiency and cooperation with the network, and work proactively to decrease disappearances.²² Nevertheless, despite the UN’s criticism of Sweden and the creation of this network, disappearances within Sweden continue to occur. The second half of 2015 brought about significant changes to Sweden’s asylum policies and practices,

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The final four digits in one’s Swedish personal identity number is given either upon birth as a Swedish citizen or when one has obtained a residence permit and is registered in the Swedish Population Register. See: Skatteverket (no date).

¹⁹ Shindo 2018, 194.

²⁰ According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “[a]n unaccompanied minor is a person who is under the age of eighteen, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is, attained earlier and who is ‘separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so.’” See: The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) 1997, 1.

²¹ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2017a, 5.

²² Länsstyrelsen Stockholm (no date b.).

which not only continue to affect adults, families, and unaccompanied minors seeking asylum today, but are also assumed to have contributed to an increase in disappearances.

As asylum policies and practices have been tightened around Europe and been justified as a reaction to the 2015 event commonly referred to and baptized as the “refugee crisis,”²³ Sweden drastically changed its asylum policies and practices with the aim to solely meet the European Union’s minimum requirements. This move consequently sparked headlines across the world, such as “Sweden slams shut its open-door policy towards refugees.”²⁴ As presented by the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Green Party spokesperson Åsa Romson at a press conference in November 2015, these regulations included, among other things, nearly dismantling the right to family reunification, issuing temporary residency permits instead of permanent residency permits (with an exception made for resettlement/quota refugees, and children and families whose asylum claims were registered before the press conference but were still waiting for a decision), as well as tightening the border through identification controls in relation to all entrance ports to Sweden.²⁵ A change in legislation on July 20, 2016, entailed that “...the right to financial assistance in the form of daily allowance and housing ended for those aged 18 and over whose asylum claims have been rejected or who have received deportation decisions and where the time limit for voluntary return had run out.”²⁶

Leading up to this change in legislation, the SMA provided the government with a prognosis stating that they predicted that circa 46,000 asylum-seekers who had formally been denied asylum would “disappear” and that their cases would thereby be handed over by the Migration Agency to the police.²⁷ According to this prognosis, the enforcement of new and rigid asylum policies and practices would consequently incite more disappearances. According to Per Löwenberg, a group manager at the National Border Police, although some of those “wanted” by the police have indeed left the country without informing any authorities, many will, nonetheless, be living “without proper

²³ According to UNHCR, as of December 7, 2015, more than 911,000 “refugees and migrants” arrived in Europe during that year, with an estimated 3,550 lives lost at sea (see: Spindler 2015). According to the SMA, 162,877 individuals applied for asylum in Sweden during 2015. Of these applicants, 35,369 were unaccompanied minors (see: Migrationsverket 2016). This in turn sparked a debate in the media as to whether one should refer to those arriving in Europe as refugees or as migrants (see: Corabattir 2015; and *BBC News* 2015). Creating less of a debate were the powerful consequences of calling what was happening a crisis, in particular a refugee crisis, and what the political and social effects of this would be. I thereby choose to put the refugee crisis in quotation marks.

²⁴ Crouch 2015.

²⁵ Holm and Svensson 2015.

²⁶ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2016a, 7-8.

²⁷ Dellling 2016.

documentation” in Sweden.²⁸ He went on to state, “[a]n enormous amount of people are going to abscond. It is very problematic. We find roughly between 10 and 20 percent of those who abscond.”²⁹ As shown thus far, not only are those who go missing quantified and thereby clustered together in their portrayal as a collective population by state institutions, but those who are *predicted to potentially* go missing are nevertheless quantified as well. Drawing on the work of Arjun Appadurai, Shahram Khosravi notes, “[s]overeign authority needs and demands ‘knowledge’ in the form of numbers and statistics in order to have an idea of the extent of the ‘problem’,” constructing and making “visible ‘illegal’ migrants as a category.”³⁰

What can be seen thus far is that, despite the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child’s critique of Sweden for its lack of both action on and investigation into the disappearances of unaccompanied minors, recent legislation changes have simultaneously been criticized by state institutions working with asylum-seekers for (in)directly encouraging disappearances. In an asylum regime where asylum-seekers are consistently reminded of the impending threat of detention if they do not adhere to the laws, laws are simultaneously put in place where the right to housing is suspended if one does not cooperate, leaving one with limited opportunities to “stay visible.” Other asylum-seekers are caught in a limbo between presence and absence, as their claims to asylum have been denied, but their deportation is impossible to implement.³¹ What we can see is that the Swedish asylum regime has tightened its asylum policies and practices, while admitting that this system will increasingly lead to more disappearances, thereby (in)directly creating and facilitating a space of inbetweenness and (re)producing a subject: the missing subject.

As Nevzat Soguk and Geoffrey Whitehall state, “[m]ovement, in all its modalities, disembeds identity from modern attempts to permanently situate and fix people’s identities within the spatial territorial boundaries of the state.”³² According to this argument, the movement of going missing can disrupt modern attempts to secure fixed identities within the state. Missingness occupies a space of inbetweenness, of not being fully present or absent within a system, and can thereby pose challenges for bureaucratic systems structured around logics of presence and absence, as state institutions (and thereby state employees) are expected to deal with this ambiguous space. This paradox, where it

²⁸ It should be noted that the Swedish terminology used by Per Löwenberg and often used to define those who have applied for asylum, received a negative decision, and then continued to live in Sweden despite having received a decision that they are no longer permitted to legally stay in Sweden as the time frame for their “voluntary” return has expired, is *papperslösa* which literally translates into “without papers.” See: Delling 2016.

²⁹ Ibid (note: my own translation of the quote from Swedish to English).

³⁰ Khosravi 2010, 99.

³¹ This may be due to reasons such as “...their home country refuses to accept them back, that they are stateless or because of medical reasons.” See: *Sveriges Radio* 2016.

³² Soguk and Whitehall 1999, 697.

appears that state institutions will at times demand visibility, and other times facilitate invisibility, contradicts the idea of the state as all-knowing, all-incorporating, and all-seeing, where “...in times of security and surveillance,” its primary agenda is to gain control through surveillance practices.³³ Consequently, this points to the need to investigate the ways in which the state, organized around governing logics of presence and absence, struggles with managing or attempts to manage the ambiguity and complexity of missingness.

1.1 Research aim and research question

As the idea that asylum-seekers go missing/are able to go missing is critiqued by actors beyond Sweden’s borders, but also from within the Swedish asylum regime itself, scenarios are presented where missing asylum-seekers appear to challenge the system. When the Swedish state expresses hopes of increasing incentives for “voluntary” returns to “origin countries,” its state institutions also acknowledge that this move will paradoxically push more people to (in)voluntarily *gå under jorden*, a Swedish term that translates into “go underground.” It should be noted that living in a society as “undocumented” or “outside the system” can often entail dire humanitarian consequences for those individuals labelled as such, leading to precarious and insecure lived realities.³⁴ These consequences are often weighed against what many fear in relation to being deported, leaving many to feel that they have no other choice but to live “outside the system.” When an increasing number of asylum-seekers attempt to escape the visibility of the state’s gaze, in a context where stricter and harsher asylum policies and practices are being enforced, it is important to examine the ruptures, breakages, and loopholes within the system itself, within the migration management apparatus. In her analysis of detention centers, Elizabeth Dauphinee states that “...even the most violently enclosed systems of sovereignty are unavoidably leaky. They cannot securitize against every challenge that might be launched- both because it is never possible to anticipate every site from which resistance might come (for resistance is already everywhere), but also because the very logic of this closure always already implies a breach.”³⁵

This thesis will therefore examine the discourses on missing asylum-seekers, both adults/families and unaccompanied minors, mainly those produced by state employees working within the Swedish asylum regime. Hence, I have chosen to interview people working at different key institutions within this

³³ Broeders 2009, 22.

³⁴ For the Swedish context, see, e.g.: Sigvardsdotter 2013; Barnombudsmannen 2017; and Svenska Röda Korset and Stockholms Stadsmission 2015.

³⁵ Dauphinee 2007, 232.

regime: the SMA, social services, and the police.³⁶ Not only are state employees at these institutions in regular contact with asylum-seekers, they are also part of a contemporary system of political management and control,³⁷ within a controlled welfare state. The majority of interviews in this thesis were carried out with employees at the SMA and social services, while a minority of the interviews were carried out with employees at the police authority.³⁸ Nevertheless, the police are a key institution within the Swedish asylum regime. Similarly to the role of individual employees at the SMA and at social services, individual employees at the police play a role within this regime, hence their inclusion in this thesis despite their quantitative underrepresentation in the interviews. This underrepresentation stemmed solely from difficulties that arose in accessing interviewees. As previously mentioned, the *aim* of this thesis is to examine the governance of missingness within the asylum regime in Sweden. By interviewing state employees who manage the asylum-seeking process and are employed to administer lives within this process, this thesis examines how missingness and governance *relate* to one another. At this point, the reader might be wondering: Why missingness? Why is this the chosen term rather than, for example, undocumented(ness)?

Given the broad span of factors that may contribute to the reasoning around *why* someone might disappear from the asylum process, I have, in this thesis, actively chosen to refer to this notion as going/being missing or missingness.³⁹ There are those who go missing as a form of resistance against being found, there are those who are missing and want to be found, and there are those who reside somewhere in between. In this thesis, the *missing subject* refers to the person who goes missing for any of the above reasons. Asylum-seekers are first and foremost incorporated into the system as an asylum-seeking subject when they initially apply for asylum, but become a missing subject when they disappear. To be missing, one must often be missing from *something* or for *someone*. In the case of this thesis, one is assumed to be missing *from* the asylum process and thereby the logics of the asylum regime. However, by using the overarching terminology of missing in this thesis, focus is also placed on the inbetweenness that *missingness* entails for the system. Missingness is

³⁶ Social services in Sweden are managed on the municipal level. Despite strong municipal autonomy in Sweden, both the SMA and social services are referred to in this thesis as state institutions and their employees as state employees, as the state encompasses governing national and local levels.

³⁷ Edkins 2011, viii.

³⁸ For this thesis, I have interviewed a total of 40 individuals: 17 individuals at the SMA, 14 at the social services, 3 at the police, 3 who were difficult to classify according to these categories, and 3 who were later excluded completely from the thesis. See: Appendix III.

³⁹ That being said, by using this umbrella term of missing, it is not my intention to ignorantly disregard the vastly different lived experiences of those individuals who embody this state of limbo within the system. There is, of course, no word that can fully and accurately represent the complexities and multitudes of these experiences, nor do I claim to have found one.

understood as something more abstract. It is the ambiguous vacuum that is created through the missing subject's absence. It is ambiguous in the sense that there are often uncertainties as to why someone might be missing, where they might physically be, whether they will come back, and whether they are alive or dead. It entails an inbetweenness of not being fully present or absent within a system and is thus an abstract no (wo)man's land "devoid of matter"⁴⁰ that state institutions are expected to deal with.

State institutions within the Swedish asylum regime are expected to deal with the space that is created and left behind when the missing subject is not physically present. The creation and existence of this space can pose challenges for state employees who attempt to manage its uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Hence, I am interested in how state employees at these institutions attempt to handle this space, not as representatives of these institutions, but rather as participants in the Swedish asylum regime. This thesis will thereby address the following research question: *How is missingness governed within the Swedish asylum regime, and what does this tell us about different technologies of power involved in the governance of migration?*

1.2 Governmentality and the question of the missing

So, what is meant by governance? The notion of *governmentality* will be further elaborated on in Chapter 2, but as this thesis examines the governance of missingness, it is important to take note of the meaning of governance early on. French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) has famously stated, "...the state has no heart, as we well know, but not just in the sense that it has no feelings, either good or bad, but it has no heart in the sense that it has no interior. The state is nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities."⁴¹ It is produced and reproduced through practices, forces and institutions,⁴² such as, through the SMA and social services. Foucault describes governmentality as "...the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major forms of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument."⁴³ As a form of power, govern-

⁴⁰ According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the noun vacuum refers to either an "emptiness of space" or "a space absolutely devoid of matter." See: Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2021.

⁴¹ Foucault 2008b, 77.

⁴² Foucault 2009, 296 & 286.

⁴³ Ibid., 108.

mentality “takes charge of a population,” i.e., governs a population, using different techniques and tactics of management.⁴⁴ This includes targeting the population through *different technologies of power*.

According to Foucault, power can be complex, proliferated, and multiplied⁴⁵ and can operate through different technologies. As elaborated on in Chapter 2, the term different technologies of power refers to the “...methods and procedures for governing human beings,”⁴⁶ and in this thesis, these include Foucault’s notions of disciplinary power, biopower, and pastoral power. It is important, however, to briefly mention the notion of biopolitics here, as it is a dominant governing logic that helps us better understand how governmentality has the population as its target.⁴⁷ According to Jenny Edkins, contemporary systems of political management based on the administration of populations, “...treat people as objects to be governed, with the aim of safeguarding populations at whole...”⁴⁸ This quote from Edkins coincides with the theoretical underpinnings of biopolitics. Biopolitics, as developed by Foucault, can briefly be explained as what occurs when sovereign power deals with a population as a political problem, exercising power over *life* through policies and practices, rather than exercising power over *death*.⁴⁹ Biopolitics, which produces the population as an object of governance and thereby adheres to specific governing logics, itself is produced by a specific technology of power called biopower. Biopolitics is exercised through biopower, as “[b]iopower signifies not only the event of the entry of life into power but *that* which ‘brought’ life into the realm of power. The concept of biopolitics, in turn, signifies merely the techniques by which biopower is exercised ‘in its many forms and modes of application’ within societies...”⁵⁰

According to Foucault, biopower emerged as a technology of power in the second half of the 18th century. It emerged as a technology of power that was less concerned with disciplining individual bodies, and more concerned with regulating humans as a species.⁵¹ Foucault found that, in the 19th century, sovereign power became a decentered power interested in promoting life, rather than a centered power that threatened life.⁵² Thus, with this development, governing logics (in this case: biopolitical logics) attempted to *grasp* and *understand* life. As a result, Foucault’s writings on biopolitics emphasize sovereign power’s relationship to both life and death. Hence, the dichotomy of life and death has trickled down into the writings of researchers drawing on his work.

⁴⁴ Debrix and Barder 2009, 407.

⁴⁵ Foucault 1998, 49

⁴⁶ Behrent 2013, 55.

⁴⁷ Debrix and Barder 2009, 405.

⁴⁸ Edkins 2011, viii.

⁴⁹ Foucault 1998, 136-138.

⁵⁰ Reid 2006, 117.

⁵¹ Foucault 2008a, 242-243.

⁵² Neal 2009, 164.

In a lecture on biopolitics, Foucault states, “[i]n the right of sovereignty, death was the moment of the most obvious and most spectacular manifestation of absolute power of the sovereign; death now becomes, in contrast, the moment when the individual escapes all power, falls back on himself and retreats, so to speak, into his own privacy. Power no longer recognizes death. Power literally ignores death.”⁵³

Yet what about the missing? What about those who were incorporated into a bureaucratic system of management, only to leave it without (one would assume) state institutions knowing of their whereabouts, thereby disturbing the dichotomy of life and death? Does power recognize the missing, or does it ignore the missing? Is it possible for it to do both? Employees bestowed with the power to administer, regulate and control populations, such as those seeking asylum, will inevitably produce, observe, and interact and engage with the missing, perhaps to different extents, at different degrees of recognition, and at different stages in their work. Judging by the empirical examples that have been mentioned thus far, it appears as if power does not ignore the missing, but rather struggles to relate to the missing. One can thus begin to imagine sites of tension to be found in these struggles, as state employees attempt to understand, manage and relate to an “inbetweenness” that often resides outside of pre-established bureaucratic logics centered on governing life by incorporating populations into systems of management. This produces asylum-seekers who are not only present within the system, but also visible in the gaze of state institutions. Given that the ambiguity and complexity of missingness have the potential to put pressure on a system organized around the dichotomy of presence and absence, I am interested in exploring what this implies for attempts to govern the phenomenon of missingness, as well as what happens during this process.

1.3 Research contributions

By examining the governance of missingness within the Swedish asylum regime and delving into the different technologies of power that attempt to manage the uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of missingness, this thesis contributes to previous research on *missing migrants* and the *governance of migration*. Previous literature dealing with migration, bordering practices, and their (violent) effects, can often be found in the field of International Relations (IR), in particular the subfields of Critical Migration Studies (CMS), Critical Security Studies (CSS), and Critical Border Studies (CBS). As will be examined in the literature review chapter of this thesis (Chapter 3), research focusing on both the missing in the context of migration and the governance of

⁵³ Foucault 2008a, 248.

migration often finds its home in CMS. This section will outline three main research contributions that this thesis makes, as it: (1.) introduces and engages with the inbetweenness of missingness; (2.) examines what forms of governance become visible when governing logics are challenged; and (3.) disrupts the perpetuation of the state as a self-existent entity.

By examining the notion of missing asylum-seekers in Sweden, this thesis provides detailed insights into a specific site that has been left rather unexplored in the field of CMS in particular, using empirics gathered while probing into this unknown territory. As previously mentioned and as will be elaborated on in depth in the literature review chapter of this thesis (Chapter 3), missing asylum-seekers are often *missing* from IR research, including the fields of CMS, CSS, and CBS. When included, if at all, missing asylum-seekers are often equated with the deaths of migrants and asylum-seekers, in particular those who have died, or presumably died, on the border landscapes between the United States and Mexico, or the Mediterranean Sea.⁵⁴ The governance of migration literature has thus been preoccupied with the governance of life (i.e., migrants known to be alive) or the governance of death (i.e., migrants often symbolically referred to as missing despite a presumed or confirmed death).⁵⁵

As previously mentioned, however, this thesis encompasses the inbetweenness of what missingness can entail, missingness as neither life nor death, and what this means for a regime whose fundamental existence is rooted in logics of inclusion and exclusion, presence and absence. As Judith Butler explains "...if the state binds in the name of the nation, conjuring a certain version of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes."⁵⁶ Or more specifically, as Grégoire Chamayou asks, "[w]hat protection can those who are expelled from the protective order enjoy?," especially when "...protection has been monopolized by the authorities of the nation-state."⁵⁷ Studying acts of expulsion from this monopolized protective order per se is nothing new to IR, as the lived realities of those who are, for example, labelled as stateless or undocumented, or those awaiting physical expulsion in detention centers across the globe, have and continue to be documented in the CMS field (...and rightfully so).⁵⁸ Yet what happens when a subject (in this case, an asylum-seeker) is viewed as attempting to

⁵⁴ There is a whole special issue of *Social Research* dedicated to this topic specifically. See: Alonso and Nienass (eds.) 2016. In this particular issue, and for research on bodies of missing migrants, see: Edkins 2016. For more research on this topic, see also: Doty 2007; and Perera 2006.

⁵⁵ See, e.g.: McNevin 2014; Tazzioli 2019a and 2019b; Ansems de Vries 2016; McCluskey 2019; Edkins 2011 and 2016; Perera 2006; and Doty 2007.

⁵⁶ Butler and Spivak 2007, 4-5.

⁵⁷ Chamayou 2012, 135.

⁵⁸ See, e.g.: De Genova 2002 and 2013; Hellgren 2014; Khosravi 2010; and Sigvardsdotter 2013.

leave the system, i.e., as “(in)voluntarily” expelling themselves from the protective order, before a state institution has either made a decision regarding potential expulsion, or has been able to carry through the act of physical expulsion if that decision has already been made? Is the subject simultaneously “...contained and dispossessed...”⁵⁹ by state institutions when they are missing? Experimenting with questions such as these not only enables a contribution in relation to missing migrants and missingness, but also pushes us to delve into what forms of governance become visible when the governing logics themselves are potentially disrupted.

Thus, exploring the ambiguity of *missingness* (i.e., not knowing whether the missing person is alive nor dead, where they are, and what has happened to them) not only adds a layer to previous migration research in terms of what missingness can entail, but also enables one to examine what this in-betweenness means for *governing logics*. There is perhaps no better way to grasp the notion of governance and its operating logics than by looking at a state such as Sweden, a state that functions through bureaucratic management and thus has many opportunities for control, and throwing a monkey wrench into the system to see how it manages. The monkey wrench in this scenario is the phenomenon of missingness. In doing so, I am able to examine what forms of governance, as manifested through different technologies of power, become visible when governing logics are confronted, as well as the potentialities and limits of state power over migrants (i.e., specifically asylum-seekers) when they are deemed to be missing. As this thesis will go on to show, I do this by examining three discursive themes found in my interview material: (in)visibilities, control, and care. Although all three discursive themes are present in the study, discourses of control and discourses of care, in particular, emerge repetitively in the material. Thus, by drawing on the work of Foucault, different technologies of power, including disciplinary power, biopower, and pastoral power, are found to be embedded and entangled in these discursive practices, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes in contradiction to one another, and sometimes irrespective of one another. By examining how missingness and governance relate to one another in these ways, this thesis has the potential to “...call into question the operations of...[governance] itself.”⁶⁰ Consequently, I am able to speak to logics of governance in general through the challenges posed by missingness.

In the act of demystifying the state by unveiling the emotions, contradictions, and struggles of those employed to represent the state, this thesis also contributes to critical IR literature as a whole, a scholarship that, at times, risks

⁵⁹ Butler and Spivak 2007, 5.

⁶⁰ This notion is inspired by the work of Wilcox, who states, that “[b]odies...can be thought of not only as objects to be defended from injury or as signifiers or ultimate truth, but as sites of tension and paradox that call into question the operations of security itself.” See: Wilcox 2015, 7.

reproducing the state as a self-existent entity.⁶¹ State employees working within the asylum regime are brought into a sphere of visibility, as the state itself is dispersed, multiplied and fractured through practices, forces and institutions.⁶² When it comes to existing research that examines how different technologies of power are manifested through these practices, forces and institutions, the rabid *effects* of, for example biopower, are continuously brought into a sphere of visibility, such as the effects of bordering and surveillance practices and technologies,⁶³ but *who* or *what* comprises the power-producing apparatus is often simplified or excluded. When examining the resistance of human rights lawyers to Australian immigration centers, Anne Orford states, “[t]he dominant strategy is to describe the effects of biopower as emanating from an all-powerful sovereign... To the extent that human rights lawyers have both taken as given and tried to find a sovereign modal of power, they have not been able to address the operation of the mechanisms of power.”⁶⁴ If incautious, the state and the migration management apparatus (as a manifestation of the state) risk being portrayed as self-existent, self-fulfilling prophecies. They become Jabberwockies, creatures that are unknown but must nevertheless be slayed.⁶⁵

In this thesis, addressing the operation of different technologies of power entails unmasking the Jabberwocky and probing into the (in)formal discourses produced in everyday workplace corridors, by employees working at the SMA and social services. Butler refers to employees such as these as “petty sovereigns,” because they are involved in the running of the government through “...their role as the administrative organs of the state” and are “...part of the mechanism that manages populations.”⁶⁶ Even though they are “instrumentalized, deployed by tactics of power they do not control,” they also have the ability to act on this power, as “their acts are judgments” and these judgments are “...final, not subject to review, and not subject to appeal.”⁶⁷ Although in the case of the Swedish asylum regime, all *formal* decisions made by employees at the SMA are subject to appeal through the juridical system (...where they end up in the hands of what Butler would refer to as more petty sovereigns), the everyday *informal* decisions, acts, interactions, and practices surrounding asylum-seekers are based on acts of judgment, despite this system of “checks and balances.” Addressing the operation of different technologies

⁶¹ Foucault 2009, 296 & 286.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ See, e.g.: Amoores 2013; Basham and Vaughan-Williams 2013; Broeders 2009; Vaughan-Williams 2015; Amicelle et al. 2015; and Shepherd and Sjoberg 2012.

⁶⁴ Orford 2007, 215.

⁶⁵ The Jabberwocky is an undefinable (in relation to previous knowledge) creature/monster who is slayed by a boy in a poem entitled “Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll. See: Carroll 1872.

⁶⁶ Shindo 2018, 185

⁶⁷ Butler quoted in Shindo 2018, 185.

of power within these everyday corridors with regard to missingness and governing logics also creates the possibility of finding modes or acts of resistance within these corridors themselves, as “[t]he chief forms of resistance in contemporary society are all struggles that contest a certain form of subjectivity.”⁶⁸

By actively denying the state as a self-existent entity, and engaging with a multitude of state employees instead, I open the door to a more complex reading of the governance of missingness. I thereby question the common narrative that is often reproduced in critical research: the portrayal of the state as all-knowing, all-incorporating, and all-seeing.⁶⁹ Instead, I allow myself to embrace the possibility of mess, a mess in which individual state employees working on the ground, so to speak, may struggle with how missingness is to be managed, how it is to be determined, registered, related to and processed. The state employees interviewed may not necessarily always agree with one another on what is expected of them as governing subjects, adding to the complexity of how missingness and governance relate to one another. In addition to studying how those whose everyday lives are (dis)ordered because of governing logics go about resisting asylum policies and practices,⁷⁰ by examining the discourses produced by state employees, I am also open to the possibility of finding acts of defiance against governing logics from *within* these state institutions as well.

1.4 Thesis roadmap

Hereafter, this thesis is organized according to the following structure. Chapter 2 introduces the different components of Foucault’s work that comprise the theoretical apparatus of this thesis. In this chapter, I delve into different technologies of power as put forward through Foucault’s work, including disciplinary power, biopower, and pastoral power. I also further expand on the notion of governmentality. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the governance

⁶⁸ Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 6.

⁶⁹ Here it is difficult to escape the effects that the Foucauldian rendition of Bentham’s panopticon has had on critical research. This will be elaborated on more in Chapter 3. See: Foucault 1991a, 200.

⁷⁰ Edkins and Pin-Fat, for example, argue that practices such as hunger strikes, demonstrations or grassroots communitas, by refugees and asylum-seekers, both contest and resist sovereign power (see: Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 18). Nyers also asks in relation to refugees, asylum-seekers and “illegal” workers: “[i]s their ‘zone of shame, disgrace or debasement’ not the interminable ‘waiting areas,’ the detention facilities, deportation flights, and lives forced underground? What are the possibilities for political agency in such abject ‘zones’ today?” (see: Nyers 2003, 1074).

of migration literature found in CMS. As scholars often draw on these different technologies of power when examining how migrants and asylum-seekers are governed, I outline three main discursive themes that I have found in this literature to describe where these different technologies are found embedded and entangled: (in)visibilities, control, and care. In this chapter, I also outline the existing (albeit barely existing) literature on the missing subject in IR, and the ambiguity of missingness. Chapter 4 introduces the research design of this thesis, including the theoretical underpinnings of discourse and how this study was conducted through a Foucauldian interpretation of discourse. The empirical part of this thesis comprises Chapter 5 to 7. This includes an analysis of how the *missing subject* is produced, in relation to (in)visibilities, within the specific site of the Swedish asylum regime (Chapter 5), and how *missingness* is governed through different technologies of power embedded in discourses of control (Chapter 6) and discourses of care (Chapter 7). In Chapter 8, I provide the overall conclusions that can be drawn from this study, including hopes for future research endeavors.

2. Understanding Power Through Foucault

This chapter introduces different components of Michel Foucault's work that when assembled comprise the theoretical apparatus for this thesis. Section 2.1 begins with an introduction to a Foucauldian understanding of the *analytics of power*, and how power produces, generates, circulates, and operates through mechanisms, tactics, technologies and devices. This is best illustrated in Section 2.2, through Foucault's analysis of *disciplinary power*, a specific technology of power directed at the individual and the body. By grasping the notion of disciplinary power, this chapter transitions into the notion of *biopower* in Section 2.3, a technology of power that no longer necessarily focuses on the individual and their body per se, but that attempts to grasp the population through a power over life. By also introducing the technology of *pastoral power* (in Section 2.4) these technologies of power lead to an overarching analytical toolbox of *governmentality*, "...a cluster of concepts that can be used to enhance the think-ability and criticize-ability of past and present forms of governance,"⁷¹ as examined in Section 2.5. This thesis adopts an overarching governmentality perspective when examining the governance of missingness within the asylum regime.

2.1 The analytics of power

Foucault clearly states that the aim of his work is not to materialize a "theory" of power, but rather to explore the "analytics" of power.⁷² This thesis will proceed to answer the question: how is missingness governed within the Swedish asylum regime, and what does this tell us about the different technologies of power involved in the governance of migration? Given this question, I want to begin by amplifying what a Foucauldian understanding of power entails, and *how* it works. Rather than representing power as solely possessed, repressive and/or coercive,⁷³ Foucault enables an analysis of power that encourages us to think beyond the characteristics of power previously constrained by restrictive adjectives. There are mechanisms, tactics, technologies, and devices

⁷¹ Walters 2012, 2.

⁷² Foucault 1998, 82.

⁷³ Neal 2009, 163.

of power and their deployment is complex. Rather than constricting an analysis of power to solely a top-down approach, power can instead be analyzed through how it survives and breeds through *networks*, as it is proliferated and multiplied.⁷⁴ It “...is not founded on itself or generated by itself.”⁷⁵ One can imagine it through the image of dropping ink into water, as it consistently embodies new shapes and spreads through the flow of its feathery swirls, as it intertwines with and permeates the water while appearing paradoxically heavy and weightless at the same time. Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero point to how:

[a]n analytic of power is an exercise of thought concerned with detailing the operational logics, forces and dynamics at play in a specific configuration of power relations. Since power for Foucault is always a matter of the relations established by a set of practices, specifically those concerned with changing mechanisms of power/knowledge, a Foucauldian analytic of power is necessarily also an exploration of the forces, logics and dynamics at play in assemblages of such practices.⁷⁶

According to Foucault, power is relational and exercised from multiple points.⁷⁷ It is productive, decentralized, and dispersed and one must analyze “...the specific historical relations of power and the discursive practices that sustain or resist them.”⁷⁸ Hence, we must approach questions of power by first decentering our analysis of power by looking at its extremities and the material techniques through which it interferes in life. We must look at the points where it is exercised and applied “externally,” as well as understand that it constitutes individuals as both subjects and objects while it circulates in networks. Rather than working from the top down, we should look at our analysis by working

⁷⁴ Many of Foucault’s adjectives to describe power are found in his book *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. In his analysis of sexual repression, for example, he explains: “It is said that no society has been more prudish; never have the agencies of power taken such care to feign ignorance of the thing they prohibited, as if they were determined to have nothing to do with it. But it is the opposite that has become apparent, at least after a general review of the facts: never have there existed more centers of power; never more attention manifested and verbalized; never more circular contacts and linkages; never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold, only to spread elsewhere.” See: Foucault 1998, 49.

⁷⁵ Foucault 2009, 1.

⁷⁶ Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 272.

⁷⁷ Foucault 1998, 94-97.

⁷⁸ Edkins 1999, 52-54.

from the bottom up. And finally, we must examine how mechanisms and practices form into ideologies and knowledges.⁷⁹ Power and knowledge are mutually constituted,⁸⁰ as power relations are entangled both in knowledge production and in the production of a “truth.” Truth is thus always suffused with power.⁸¹

That being said, Foucault’s work examining the analytics of power is often drawn upon in relation to the notion of *resistance*. Foucault claims that power cannot exist without resistance. Where one finds power, one finds resistance.⁸² In *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics*, Jenny Edkins and Véronique Pin-Fat argue that one must acknowledge a distinct difference between *relationships of violence* (that “act immediately and directly on others”) and *relationships of power* (that “act upon their actions”).⁸³ Foucault has argued that resistance “breaks down” within relationships of violence, but:

[o]n the other hand, a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that “the other” (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible interventions may open up.⁸⁴

Thus, the exercise of power is “...a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action.”⁸⁵ In the following section, we will explore in what way power may interact with and produce this “Other,” that is to say, the one over whom power is exercised, by outlining the notion of disciplinary power.

2.2 An outline of disciplinary power

Foucault often refers to the notion of *technologies of power*. This term is commonly deployed throughout his work to refer to “...methods and procedures for governing human beings” and is used “...to highlight the ways in which

⁷⁹ Neal 2009, 167-168.

⁸⁰ Edkins 1999, 52.

⁸¹ Foucault 1998, 69 & 100.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁸³ Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 9.

⁸⁴ Foucault quoted in Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

power relations operate- not necessarily to denounce them, but rather to challenge their professions of neutrality (i.e. their claim to have no effects)...”⁸⁶ Throughout the progression of Foucault’s work, he traces, through different historical genealogies,⁸⁷ the relationship between the body/bodies and their subjection to different technologies of power. This interplay is well described through Eeva Puumala’s work on sovereign control and its ripple effect between the state and the body of the asylum-seeker, as she states, “[t]he body is deeply, sensuously, and materially caught in the deployment of power.”⁸⁸ Foucault introduces the knuckle-whitening grasp that power can have on the individual body as something called *disciplinary power*. This specific technology of power is a seizure of power directed at (wo)man-as-body (thereby individualizing in its effects), in comparison to biopower, which is a seizure of power directed at (wo)man-as-species (thereby massifying in its effects).⁸⁹

At the end of the 17th century and in the course of the 18th century, the technology of disciplinary power emerged,⁹⁰ in which the power to punish penetrated into the social body,⁹¹ putting an end to “...the physical confrontation between the sovereign and the condemned man...”⁹² From the days in which public executions lathered with acts of torture were the preferred penal method used to discipline subjects, to the modern day penal system, one can observe a change in the relationship between both bodies and the deliverance of punishment. In using methods of torture, the body was previously treated as the be-all and end-all, as the goal of torture was to touch and reach the body itself. Yet within the modern penal system, the individual is instead deprived of liberty through incarceration, and the body “...is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions,”⁹³ i.e., a system that imposes various practices of *control*. By meticulously analyzing police and military institutions, Foucault states that:

...disciplinary power became an integrated system, linked from the inside to the economy and to the aims of the mechanism in which it was practiced. It was also organized as a multiple, automatic and anonymous power; for although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network ‘holds’ the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with ef-

⁸⁶ Behrent 2013, 55.

⁸⁷ Please note: Foucault’s accounts are often specifically Western-centric in nature. His work looks at which assemblages of power emerged out of Western Europe, beginning in the 17th century. See: Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 270.

⁸⁸ Puumala 2017, 35.

⁸⁹ Foucault 2008a, 242-243.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Foucault 1991a, 82.

⁹² Ibid., 73.

⁹³ Ibid., 10-11.

fects of power that derive from one another: supervisors, perpetually supervised. The power in the hierarchized surveillance of the disciplines is not possessed as a thing, or transferred as a property; it functions like a piece of machinery. And, although it is true that its pyramidal organization gives it a ‘head,’ it is the apparatus as a whole that produces ‘power’ and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field. This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no shade and constantly supervises the individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising; and absolutely ‘discreet,’ for it functions permanently and largely in silence.⁹⁴

Despite dissecting police and military institutions, this is the only time, to the best of my knowledge, in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, when Foucault mentions those entrusted with the task of supervising the supervised. The disciplinary system as described above is embedded with a relational dimension of power that produces a machine, self-fulfilling in its prophecy. A tongue-twister appears: the supervised are supervised by supervisors who are supervised, entertaining the idea of power as paradoxically (in)visible, but simultaneously found everywhere, distributing and producing all individuals caught in its force. Rather than solely analyzing the *effects* of power, Foucauldian-inspired research should nonetheless be ruthless in additionally analyzing the apparatus as a whole, in its *production* of power.

Hence, in accordance with Foucault’s understanding of power, I believe that we must understand *how* power works if we are to achieve change within an apparatus, if change is the aim. By focusing on the production of power and interviewing state employees, this thesis hopes to help demystify the asylum regime, thereby both complicating and resisting its representation as a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Gavin John Douglas Smith claims in his analysis of CCTV operators as either empowered watchers or disempowered workers, “...far from being a unilateral and static property, power in this milieu, much like a restless tide, flows back and forth in interaction between subjectivity and screen, self and spirit, body and bureaucratic organization.”⁹⁵ Along similar lines, this thesis finds that, much like a restless tide, state employees, as either empowered watchers or disempowered workers, struggle with the complexity of how to perceive their role in governing missingness.

Disciplinary power as a specific technology of power can be used as an instrument or “specialized” by institutions and/or apparatuses, such as the state apparatus.⁹⁶ Power, often represented in IR as visible and as brute force, is instead made (in)visible through the notion of discipline, needing both concepts (invisibility and visibility) to function. Foucault states that disciplinary power is:

⁹⁴ Ibid., 176-177.

⁹⁵ Smith 2009, 133.

⁹⁶ Foucault 1991a, 215-216.

...exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection.⁹⁷

Hence, the subject is controlled through its subjection to imposed visibility. As punishment transforms from "...the vengeance of the sovereign to the defence of society,"⁹⁸ these mechanisms of power are dispersed and disintegrated into the social body, surveilling the everyday lives of individuals: the way they behave, what they do, how they do it, and so forth.⁹⁹ According to Anne Orford, this exercise of power has replaced coercive juridical or sovereign power as the dominant form of power in liberal states.¹⁰⁰ Foucault, however, goes from his notion of disciplinary power to biopower in *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*. We move from a power that breeds the notion of a productive individual, trained within an institution, to a power exercised over life, a power whose epicenter revolves around the notion of human life and its promotion.¹⁰¹

2.3 An outline of biopower

Starting in the 17th century, power over life transformed through two interconnected poles of development: 1.) the disciplines, that is to say an *anatomo-politics of the human body* and 2.) regulatory controls, that is to say a *biopolitics of the population*. The disciplines, i.e., disciplinary power, "...centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls..."¹⁰² Following on from this somewhat later, regulatory controls developed. Power began to focus on the body of the species, the body of the *population*. A reading of Foucault's notion of population does not correspond to the notion of population as often used in "common language," that is to say the group of people inhabiting a specific geographically defined space. According to Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero, a Foucauldian understanding of population is "not a subject, a people or a public. A population is a cohort of biological individuals" that are "...said to display behavioural characteristics and correlations."¹⁰³ Power

⁹⁷ Ibid., 187.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 90.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 77-78.

¹⁰⁰ Orford 2007, 208-209.

¹⁰¹ Neal 2009, 164.

¹⁰² Foucault 1998, 139-140.

¹⁰³ Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 267.

thus began targeting populations, to supervise and regulate biological processes such as “...propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary” through both interventions and regulatory controls.¹⁰⁴ It is through these practices that the potentiality to *control* aspects of the population through regulation rather than discipline emerges. The biological processes involving the population became regularized rather than disciplined, and so at the end of the 18th century, what emerges is what Foucault eventually calls *biopolitics*.¹⁰⁵

This focus on human life as such varied greatly from the defining feature of sovereign power in its ancient form, which according to Foucault had the absolute and unconditional right to decide over both life and death, thereby “the right to take life or let live.”¹⁰⁶ The right to life, however, was only brought into existence through the mere abstinence of death, as the sovereign power “...evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring.”¹⁰⁷ With this development, however, “the right to *take* life or *let* live” developed into a power with a biopolitical aim to “*foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death,”¹⁰⁸ or as mentioned in the introduction, “...‘make’ live and ‘let’ die.”¹⁰⁹ It “...characterized a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through. The old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life.”¹¹⁰ Death becomes isolated to the outside of the power relationship,¹¹¹ “...death now becomes, in contrast, the moment when the individual escapes all power, falls back on himself and retreats, so to speak, into his own privacy. Power no longer recognizes death. Power literally ignores death.”¹¹²

In the 18th century, the population thereby emerged as both a political and an economic problem. How the population gave birth, how long they lived, how long they were expected to live, how fertile they were, how ill they were, how they lived and whether they migrated intrigued those with regulatory force.¹¹³ Death in the form of famine, plague and so forth was ceasing to have the same effect on life as it previously had, and the development of different fields of knowledge concerned with life, such as the improvement of agricultural techniques, meant that control over life reduced certain risks, which now

¹⁰⁴ Foucault 1998, 139-140.

¹⁰⁵ Foucault 2008a, 243.

¹⁰⁶ Foucault 1998, 135-136.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 138 (Please note: italics are in the original text).

¹⁰⁹ Foucault 2008a, 241.

¹¹⁰ Foucault 1998, 139-140.

¹¹¹ Neal 2009, 164.

¹¹² Foucault 2008a, 248.

¹¹³ Foucault 1998, 25; and Foucault 2008a, 242-243.

posed less of a threat to the population.¹¹⁴ The population became “knowable,” measurable and predictable through the manifestation of patterns and through the emergence of biopolitics.¹¹⁵ It should be noted that Foucault makes a clear distinction between *biopolitics* and *biopower*. *Biopower* is “...the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species.”¹¹⁶ Biopolitics, according to Foucault, are the effects of biopower, or the techniques by which biopower is exercised,¹¹⁷ as “...one would have to speak of *bio-power* to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life.”¹¹⁸

This genealogy of biopower, as told by Foucault, has, however, been rightfully criticized by “...Black, indigenous, decolonial, and postcolonial studies scholars” who have “...pointed out that racism is fundamental to the idea of the human that formed the basis for biopower.”¹¹⁹ Despite this, “...the constitutive role of racial and colonial violence...” has largely been excluded from the genealogy of biopower.¹²⁰ Foucault did acknowledge, to a certain extent, the role of race in his work, especially in relation to those whose lives are deemed to be worthy of protection and those who are to be “rejected in death,” but “...he could only see race as a sorting process *after* the fact of the establishment of biopower.”¹²¹ As Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit state, because Foucault (and thereby Foucauldian security studies), “...rely on White humanist notions of man prior to racialization, the racism they deal with is a kind of racism-without-colonialism, more an unfortunate cultural artifact than a global system of expropriation fundamental to the conditions of possibility for the liberal way of war and biopolitical security assemblages.”¹²² Within the work of Foucault, racism appears to have conceptual value when it is situated within the biopolitical west, rather than the “colonized rest.”¹²³ Foucault’s genealogy of forms of governance is thus limited to the space of Europe, thereby also meaning that “non-European or postcolonial subjugated knowledges” are often excluded from his work,¹²⁴ as the role of colonialism

¹¹⁴ Foucault 2013, 46.

¹¹⁵ See, e.g.: Foucault 1998 and 2013.

¹¹⁶ Foucault 2009, 1.

¹¹⁷ Reid 2006, 117.

¹¹⁸ Foucault 1998, 143.

¹¹⁹ Howell and Richter-Monpetit 2019, 5-6.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²³ Weheliye 2014, 57.

¹²⁴ Salter 2019, 371.

is problematically taken out of the narrative of biopolitics.¹²⁵ Hence, a broader, more accurate genealogy of biopower would acknowledge how biopolitics was “...perfected in colonialism, indigenous genocide, racialized indentured servitude, and racial slavery, for instance.”¹²⁶ Biopolitics, as perfected in colonialism, continues to play a fundamental role in the production of the contemporary asylum regime and its effects.

Another point of contention in Foucault’s work prompts us to ask: what is the role of the state and/or institutions in how biopower functions? Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri critique Foucault on this exact point, arguing that he provides no answer to the question of “...who or what drives the system, or rather, who is the “bios,”” stating, “[w]hat Foucault fails to grasp finally are the real dynamics of production in biopolitical society.”¹²⁷ It can be argued that Foucault is much clearer about what institutions are involved in the production of disciplinary power, from the police system to the military institution and its dispersion through the social body. Although it is unclear as to *who* or *what* drives the system with regard to a biopolitical ordering, that is to say, who or what keeps the wheel churning, we must turn our attention to regulatory apparatuses, whether they be medical, administrative, and so forth, in their specific contexts (temporally and spatially) and in their specific networks, as the mere act of power taking “...charge of life needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms.”¹²⁸ As Foucault explains, techniques of power that both individualize and massify through their access to the body/bodies are in fact instrumentalized by multiple institutions, such as the family, the army, educational systems, and the administration of collective bodies.¹²⁹ Foucault claims that there are two sets, “[a]n organic institutional set, or the organo-discipline of the institution, if you like, and, on the other hand, a biological and Statist set, or bioregulation by the State.”¹³⁰ He explains that institutions and the state should not be framed as a dichotomy, as some apparatuses such as that of the police function as both a disciplinary and a state apparatus, and at the same time, mechanisms of regulation are also found in sub-state institutions such as welfare funds. He continues with the notion that disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms do not exist at the same level and can therefore be articulated together.¹³¹

If we turn to Foucault’s original texts, we are guided, through his (Western-obsessed) historical genealogies, to the sites where mechanisms of power, both disciplinary and regulatory, have previously been found, manifested, generated and proliferated. In reading these original texts, some have observed

¹²⁵ Shani 2010, 212.

¹²⁶ Weheliye 2014, 59.

¹²⁷ Hardt and Negri quoted in Reid 2006, 117.

¹²⁸ Foucault 2013, 48.

¹²⁹ Foucault 1998, 141.

¹³⁰ Foucault 2008a, 250.

¹³¹ Ibid.

that, "...no point for observing the totality of biopolitics is available to us: there exists no perspective that would allow us to survey and measure the lines that together constitute the concept's theoretical circumference."¹³² Although this may be offered as a critique of Foucault, perhaps this saves us from being confined to a specific origin of biopolitics and the power/knowledge nexus that this narrative would subsequently produce. It is messy, complicated, and entangled, and perhaps we need to embrace the havoc through our engagement with it, just as with the notion of *missingness*. Hence, this thesis examines the emergence and operation of these technologies of power at *mainly* two sub-state sites where both disciplinary and regulatory powers are assumed to be productive: the SMA and social services. These two sites have roles in "managing" populations: rendering them visible, "knowable," measurable, and predictable.

2.4 An outline of pastoral power

Biopolitics as a dominant governing logic,¹³³ and the way in which it is proliferated and manifested through these sites, calls upon us to turn to a concept that Foucault describes as *governmentality*. In order to understand governmentality, however, we must also understand a crucial technology of power relevant to its story: *pastoral power*.¹³⁴ Foucault describes pastoral power as a 'background' and 'prelude' to governmentality, however as Walters states, "[i]t is not a question of pastoral power appearing on the historical stage, performing its role, then exiting, making way for later forms of governmentality to play their parts."¹³⁵ Foucault brings forth pastoral power by asking: where does a power emerge that "...takes the form of guiding, shaping, leading, conducting humans...?"¹³⁶ He traces the idea and organization of pastoral power back to the Mediterranean East: "...Egypt, Assyria, Mesopotamia, and above all, of course, in the Hebrews."¹³⁷ Hence, Foucault begins to examine multiple articulations of this technology of power by turning to the Ancient world, and in particular, the rise of the Christian pastorate,¹³⁸ claiming that pastoral power's introduction into the Western world was through the Christian Church.¹³⁹ Pastoral power is especially interesting in that techniques of individualization are incorporated into the governing of a larger population, as

¹³² Campbell and Sitze 2013, 1-2.

¹³³ Debrix and Barder 2009, 405.

¹³⁴ Walters 2012, 21.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³⁷ Foucault 2009, 123.

¹³⁸ Walters 2012, 21-22.

¹³⁹ Foucault 2009, 129.

illuminated through, for example, the Christian practice of confessionals.¹⁴⁰ It should be noted that this practice of confessionals continues to permeate the Swedish asylum regime today, as asylum interviews are constructed in a way that the asylum-seeker has to “confess” past movements and past/current traumas in order for the caseworker to “help” and “guide” the asylum-seeker.¹⁴¹

In tracing the genealogy of pastoral power, Foucault states that “[p]astoral power is a power of care.”¹⁴² It is first and foremost “...exercised over a multiplicity in movement (a flock); it is fundamentally beneficent (caring for the flock), and it individualizes its subjects (knowing each member of the flock individually).” It is “[a] mobile, beneficent, and individualizing power.”¹⁴³ Yet, these techniques attend (or appear to attend) “...to the wellbeing and moral propriety of both individuals and communities simultaneously...,”¹⁴⁴ and thus offer “...a tricky combination in the same political structures of individualization techniques and of totalization procedures.”¹⁴⁵ The Church’s simultaneous focus on both individualization and the population in general is seen as foreshadowing what is later characterized as *neoliberal governmentality*. The pastor is both “...a ‘relay’ of surveillance and discipline” while promoting “...self-reflexive, self-governing subjects,” thereby combining disciplinary and subjectifying forms of power.¹⁴⁶ Pastoral power is transcendent in that “human shepherds” are seen as subordinately dependent on and submissive to the supreme shepherd/divine authority: God.¹⁴⁷ This implies that there is a pastoral relationship between “...God, the pastor (his representative) and the pastorate (the Christian community),” while “[t]he relation between God and his people is conceived...as the relation between the shepherd and the flock...”¹⁴⁸

These techniques “...experienced an expansion and secularization in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”¹⁴⁹ We begin to see the development of the modern (Western) state when the sovereign becomes increasingly pressured to not only rule as a sovereign, but also govern the population,¹⁵⁰ as political and pastoral power are complexly intertwined.¹⁵¹ Scholars have continued to explore how pastoral power is relevant to contemporary practices of humanitarianism, as well as the 20th century understanding of the welfare

¹⁴⁰ Walters 2012, 22.

¹⁴¹ For more on the confessional complex of the global mobility regime, see: Salter 2006.

¹⁴² Foucault 2009, 127.

¹⁴³ Chamayou 2012, 15.

¹⁴⁴ Martin and Waring 2018, 1293.

¹⁴⁵ Foucault 2012, 289.

¹⁴⁶ Martin and Waring 2018, 1298.

¹⁴⁷ Chamayou 2012, 15.

¹⁴⁸ Dean 2010, 90.

¹⁴⁹ Bröckling et al. 2011, 3.

¹⁵⁰ Walters 2012, 23.

¹⁵¹ Bröckling et al. 2011, 3.

state.¹⁵² Pastoral power developed in alignment with discourses of *care* and *protection*, and was thereby operating behind a mask of persuasion as opposed to coercion.¹⁵³ Yet this tricky pastoral combination of focusing on both individualization and the population in general gave rise to larger questions to be answered, such as “can one sacrifice one sheep to save the rest of the flock?”¹⁵⁴

According to Grégoire Chamayou’s genealogy of manhunts, due to this paradox, pastoral power “...developed its own cynegetic practices, its own forms of manhunts, *pastoral hunts*.”¹⁵⁵ This means that, in the name of caring and in the name of protecting the whole flock, a few from within the flock can be sacrificed when deemed necessary, thereby transforming the original function of pastoral power from one of persuasion to one of repression.¹⁵⁶ Considering that during a pastoral hunt the threat is seen as coming from within the flock itself, the solution becomes one of excommunication, and thereby exclusion. Sacrificed subjects are eliminated when protection is withdrawn. As a result, the sacrificed, eliminated, and excluded subject is “...exposed to all kinds of predations, abandoned to a physical and spiritual death.”¹⁵⁷ Chamayou reminds us that pastoral hunts were not specific to solely religious powers/the Inquisition¹⁵⁸, but also conducted by the sovereigns. He states, “[I]et us note that this connection between the pastoral management of subjects, the monopoly on the production of truth, and the power of exclusion continued to function long afterward, beyond the strictly ecclesiastical context, in a whole series of institutions- political parties, states, and organizations, all of which function in the mode of dogma, exclusion, and purges.”¹⁵⁹ Emma McCluskey refers to the secular variant of pastoral power as “...a caring biopolitics,”¹⁶⁰ as technologies of care and technologies of control become increasingly entangled.

Hence, I believe that it is through the work of scholars such as Chamayou and McCluskey that the complexity of these different technologies of power, how they operate, and their effects are clearly illuminated. Drawing on Foucault’s descriptions of different technologies of power, we find descriptions of technologies of power that attempt to both *control* and *care*, sometimes simultaneously. As this thesis will go on to demonstrate, these three technologies of power are found embedded in discourses of control and care, and thus operating when it comes to the governance of missingness.

¹⁵² Walters 2012, 24.

¹⁵³ Chamayou 2012, 19-20.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 20 & 22.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶⁰ McCluskey 2019, 69.

2.5 An outline of governmentality

After examining Foucault's lectures and written work, Graham P. Martin and Justin Waring state, "...we can begin to plot the contours of pastoral power as not just a precursor to, but also a technology of, governmentality."¹⁶¹ Foucault begins by describing governmentality as "...the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major forms of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument."¹⁶² By adopting a governmentality lens, not only do we become aware of how the state is sustained within a general order, but we are also made aware of the role of a dynamic of forces, and their "...preservation, maintenance, or development."¹⁶³ Our minds are thereby trained to look beyond the sovereign (often portrayed through the image of the state) as the mighty holder of centralized power, and instead approach the sovereign as dependent on different procedures and mechanisms,¹⁶⁴ creating opportunities for a penetrative analysis of power as decentralized. Not only do studies of governmentality examine "...the significance of knowledge production and its connection with mechanisms of power,"¹⁶⁵ but as Dean emphasizes by drawing on Foucault, "[s]tudies of governmentality...are more concerned with how thought operates within our organized ways of doing things, our *regimes of practices*, and with its ambitions and effects."¹⁶⁶

According to Dean's reading of Foucault, regimes of practices are often institutional practices that are both routinized and ritualized. He states that "[a]n analytics of a particular regime of practices, at a minimum, seeks to identify the emergence of that regime, examine the multiple sources of the elements that constitute it, and follow the diverse processes and relations by which these elements are assembled into relatively stable forms of organization and institutional practice."¹⁶⁷ According to Foucault, the state is merely "...an episode in governmentality,"¹⁶⁸ or as he later describes, it is "...nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities."¹⁶⁹ The state itself is merely a set of practices.¹⁷⁰ By expanding an analysis of power

¹⁶¹ Martin and Waring 2018, 1298.

¹⁶² Foucault 2009, 108.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁶⁴ Debrix and Barder 2009, 400.

¹⁶⁵ Bröckling et al. 2011, 12.

¹⁶⁶ Dean 2010, 27.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁶⁸ Foucault 2009, 248.

¹⁶⁹ Foucault 2008b, 77.

¹⁷⁰ Foucault 2009, 276-277.

from one that perhaps would have traditionally examined power's manifestation in relation to a normative representation of the state, to one that instead examines different procedures and mechanisms through the concept of *multiple* governmentalities, the notion of whom or what is governed is brought into the spotlight once again, bringing us back to the notion of biopolitics. By linking the notions of biopolitics and governmentality, we find that it is people who are governed, as "[i]t is indeed through techniques and tactics of management and by way of organizational and procedural *dispositifs*¹⁷¹ that governmentality takes charge of a population, fosters its vital conditions..."¹⁷²

Governmentality, as a form of power, differs from sovereignty, as it "operates through state and non-state institutions and discourses that are legitimated neither by direct elections nor through established authority. Marked by a diffuse set of strategies and tactics, governmentality gains its meaning and purpose from no single source, nor through established authority."¹⁷³ Judith Butler elaborates on the distinction between governmentality and sovereignty and warns us against taking Foucault's words at face value when he claims that governmentality has emerged as a result of sovereignty's devitalization. She explains that if we question the notion of history as a continuum, we will find that governmentality and sovereignty, as forms of power, may exist concurrently. According to Butler, Foucault proves that these two forms of power can co-exist, despite presenting a chronology that entailed a modern progression from sovereignty to governmentality, by introducing the concept of disciplinary power.¹⁷⁴ Butler continues by using modern examples to prove her point, such as the suspension of law, in that it "...can clearly be read as a tactic of governmentality, it has to be seen in this context as also making room for the resurgence of sovereignty, and in this way both operations work together."¹⁷⁵

According to Dean's reading of Foucault, it is precisely the notion of the population that has allowed a transition from a framework of sovereignty to the intricate techniques of governmentality. Those who are governed and categorized as the population are "...no longer subjects bound together in a territory who are obliged to submit to their sovereign. They are also, by the end of the eighteenth century, living, working and social beings, with their own customs, habits, histories and forms of labour and leisure."¹⁷⁶ Although Dean articulates the notion of biopower, in terms of the population being governed, through the techniques of governmentality, the link between governmentality

¹⁷¹ According to Debrix and Barder, the Foucauldian concept of *dispositif* is often translated to "apparatus" in English. See: Debrix and Barder 2009, 407.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Butler 2006, 52.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 53-54.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 54-55.

¹⁷⁶ Dean 2010, 127.

and biopower/biopolitics is often not fully elaborated on in biopolitics research. What we instead find occupying the forefront of research engaging with biopolitics in IR is how various biopolitical agents, such as police forces, immigration officers and airport security services, create, produce and deploy unlimited violence through techniques of governmentality, to the point that it is "...expected, accepted, and anticipated by populations whose lives are said to be constantly threatened and, as such, must become the objects of sustained normalization or heightened regulation."¹⁷⁷ This thesis, however, will examine how, through techniques and tactics of management, state employees attempt to govern missingness, as missingness per se appears to challenge logics of governance organized around presence and absence (i.e., either being included in the system in order to be governed or being excluded from the system). Governmentality can be used as a toolbox, rather than as a theory as such, in attempts to understand governance in this specific site as "...an eminently practical activity that can be studied, historicized and specified at the level of rationalities, programmes, techniques and subjectivities which underpin it and give it form and effect."¹⁷⁸

2.6 Concluding remarks on understanding power

Subsequently, this thesis is interested in how Foucauldian understandings of *disciplinary power*, *biopower*, and *pastoral power* operate as technologies of governmentality, in particular regarding the governance of missingness. As outlined in this chapter, these three technologies have the potential to operate quite differently from one another. Drawing on the work of Foucault, disciplinary power imposes "...constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions,"¹⁷⁹ as well as imposing visibility on the *individual*. It has the potential to both surveil and discipline.¹⁸⁰ Biopower, however, targets and supervises the *population*.¹⁸¹ It makes the population "knowable," measurable, and predictable. Pastoral power, i.e., the "power of care,"¹⁸² focuses on the individual *and* the population, as it is assumed to attend to notions of wellbeing,¹⁸³ by guiding, shaping, leading, and conducting.¹⁸⁴ Thus, as the empirical chapters of this thesis will show, we have three different technologies of power that are

¹⁷⁷ Debrix and Barder 2009, 401.

¹⁷⁸ Walters 2012, 2.

¹⁷⁹ Foucault 1991a, 10-11.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 187 & 77-78.

¹⁸¹ Foucault 1998, 139-140.

¹⁸² Foucault 2009, 127.

¹⁸³ Martin and Waring 2018, 1293.

¹⁸⁴ Walters 2012, 21.

embedded within and operate through discourses of *control* (i.e., disciplinary power and biopower) and discourses of *care* (i.e., pastoral power). Collapsing the complexity of the social world into two discursive themes is a tricky and sensitive endeavor indeed, and thus, control and care are in no way meant to be treated as binary oppositions. As this thesis will continue to show, there are inevitable grey zones and areas of overlap. In the next chapter, however, I will explore how scholars have drawn on these technologies of power and used Foucault's concepts to examine the various ways in which *migration* is governed, as well as the discourses of (in)visibilities, control, and care that are currently found in the migration literature.

3. A Literature Review on the Governance of Migration

When we open a newspaper or tune in to parliamentary debates on the subject of migration, we are often given a mere snapshot of a multifaceted industry and the way in which it maps, analyzes, categorizes, marginalizes, facilitates, curtails, prevents, contains, and profits from the circulation of people. This migration management industry, or apparatus – with all of its actors, (in)formal networks, and (il)legal frameworks – can at first glance seem incomprehensible. If we add to this the infinite list of adjectives used to describe what it “does” and the never-ending list of nouns used to describe what subjects it produces, it can even seem overwhelming. Thus, before examining the specific case of Sweden, this chapter provides an extensive literature review looking at how this migration management industry has, according to previous scholars, attempted to govern migration. Section 3.1 begins with an outline of the fields that often examine bordering practices and their violent effects on migration. By mainly examining literature from the field of Critical Migration Studies (CMS), an overview of three themes can be found and accounted for in the literature on the governance of migration: (in)visibilities (Section 3.1.1), control (Section 3.1.2), and care (Section 3.1.3). Scholars within each theme often draw on a Foucauldian understanding of power. Section 3.2, deals with how, despite the existence of a fairly extensive literature on the governance of migration, the governance of missingness is often missing from the IR literature, as missing people, when mentioned at all, are often equated with the notion of death, rather than with an inbetweenness that has the potential to disturb governing logics organized around presence and absence.

3.1 The governance of migration in Critical Migration Studies (CMS)

For IR literature belonging in CSS (Critical Security Studies) and in its offshoot CBS (Critical Border Studies), as well as CMS (Critical Migration Studies), we often find that bordering practices and their (violent) effects are commonly dissected. As we live in an age of security in which anyone or anything can be represented as a security threat through the production and proliferation

of specific discourses,¹⁸⁵ CSS research often examines security apparatuses and their role in governing the circulation of both data and people. Several scholars in the field of CSS in particular have written extensively on the perception of migration as a threat.¹⁸⁶ From a Western-centric perspective, Jef Huysmans has summarized the European perception of migrants leading up to the late 1980s and 1990s, a period in which questions of border security increased with the tightening of European communities and reached a boiling point after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, alongside an increased fear of terrorism by the “Other.”¹⁸⁷ Although research drawing on biopolitical borders and security practices may be found in CBS and CMS research, the CBS literature tends to examine the power *over* life exercised by specific border control agents, institutions, and services, while the CMS literature tends to examine the power *of* life in relation to the agency of migrants and their modes of resistance.¹⁸⁸ By examining modes of resistance, scholars can delve into questions that Michel Foucault has been critiqued for not providing answers to, including how life can indeed resist the limitations imposed on it by biopolitical and liberal regimes.¹⁸⁹

CMS constitutes a “...growing body of literature that seeks to challenge the assumption that ‘we know what migration is and which actors are entitled to determine the political in respect of migration’”¹⁹⁰. Not only does the CMS literature often focus on the “political agency” of migrants, their lived experiences, and their potentials to resist and disrupt systems by adopting an IPS (International Political Sociology) perspective, but it also “focuses on how individual movement becomes framed in particular ways...” rather than

¹⁸⁵ It should be noted that the securitization theory, as developed by the Copenhagen School, needs to be mentioned, as it broadened the concept of security to be more than just inclusive of military threats to sovereign states. This theory argues that for something to be perceived as a threat, it must engage in a politicized process involving a speaker and an audience. Within this process, a securitizing actor (often governments, political leaders, pressure groups, etc.) will portray an issue as an existential threat to the survival of a referent object (see: Buzan and Hansen 2009, 214). For an issue to transition from being non-politicized, to politicized, to securitized, the securitizing actor must construct and speak about the issue through what is called a “speech act.” It is up to the audience to decide whether the process has been successful (see: Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, 78). The securitization process continues until a “breaking point” is finally reached and exceptional/emergency political measures are taken to curtail the threat (Please note that this paragraph is quoted from my Master’s thesis. See: Hammarstedt 2016, 11-12).

¹⁸⁶ For general examples of the securitization of migration not necessarily linked to CBS, see: Chourcri 2002; Stivachtis 2008; Huysmans 2000; and Buzan 2007.

¹⁸⁷ It should be noted that Huysmans’ perspective is not only Western-centric, but his historical timeline refers to migrants as an umbrella term and portrays Europe as having a homogenous, fixed, and stable relationship to perceptions of migration “flows.” See a summary of Huysmans’ work in: Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, 137.

¹⁸⁸ Vaughan-Williams 2015, 8.

¹⁸⁹ Reid 2006, 44.

¹⁹⁰ Guild cited in Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, 140.

“...treating migration as the mass flow of differentiated groups of people from one state to another...”¹⁹¹ An overview of the CMS literature points to common themes that will be explored in the following subsections. An overarching theme in the CMS literature is that of the *governance of migration*, and it is of particular relevance to this thesis, as this thesis examines how missingness is governed when asylum-seekers disappear. With roots that can be traced back to a Foucauldian understanding of *governmentality*, it is often used as a theoretical concept to help us place the logics and practices of the migration industry within a larger context. According to Anne McNevin, governance can be understood as “...the techniques through which subjects are constituted in line with particular administrative rationalities, including that of the modern territorial state.”¹⁹² In relation to migration, governance, “...is as much about who we understand ourselves to be as migrants and citizens and the spatial agreements that inform those self-understandings, as it is about border guards who preside over our mobility” as “...subjects are positioned in hierarchical and spatialized terms that attach degrees of (il)legitimacy, ease and hardship to their mobility.”¹⁹³

Scholars in the field might agree on the workings of a specific type of governance, but different philosophers, such as Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Rancière, are used to help us understand what is at play and what is at stake. Theoretical themes derived from these philosophical works are at times used to complement each other, but at other times to dismiss one another.¹⁹⁴ Bearing this in mind, when examining the governance of migration, I have found three reoccurring discursive themes that will be explored in this chapter and will help guide this thesis. These are: *(in)visibilities*, *control*,

¹⁹¹ Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, 140.

¹⁹² McNevin 2014, 296.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ For example, based on a Foucauldian understanding of power, Doty and Wheatley observe how different modes of power (including disciplinary power and biopower) can be observed in private immigration detention centers in the US (see: Doty and Wheatley 2013). At the same time, scholars such as Bigo warn us of treating biopolitics as an “...immanent cause or, even worse...as a causal determination of today's practices of border controls” as it “...is not a structure, a paradigm or an ideal type in Foucault's writings” (see: Bigo 2014, 220). Similarly, scholars such as Walters (2011) warn border/migration researchers that there are risks to cherry-picking Foucauldian concepts to use without complementing them with new ones. His critique of the “application” of Foucault continues in his article together with Moffette, as connections to racialization and postcolonialism are often omitted from Foucauldian border and migration studies (see: Moffette and Walters 2018). On the other hand, other scholars, such as Ansems de Vries (2016) and Johnson (2013), criticize the field's engagement with philosophers such as Agamben, for omitting the political agency of migrants while reducing them to “bare life.” Johnson therefore uses Rancière's understanding of politics to fill this void. In their research on resiliency humanitarianism in refugee camps, Ilcan and Rygiel claim that “(r)ather than the Agambenian-inspired understanding of camps as abject spaces of bare life, they are being reimagined as spaces which can produce neoliberal camp subjects” (see: Ilcan and Rygiel 2015, 338). The debates are endless.

and *care*. These three discursive themes are by no means mutually exclusive, as they merge into one another, albeit in different ways, as different technologies of power are found embedded within and operating through them. What we discover through these themes are not only the violences (re)produced by the migration management industry and the continuous production of governable subjects, but also the ruptures, breakages, and tiny pockets in which resistance is both possible and found, igniting hope for future alternative political (re)imaginaries.

3.1.1 (In)visibilities

In their work on uncovering and exposing missing bodies within the neoliberal state, Monica J. Casper and Lisa Jean Moore ask us, “[w]hat can account for the fact that certain bodies are hyper-exposed, brightly visible, and magnified, while others are hidden, missing, and vanished?”¹⁹⁵ This idea is often (re)produced through the work of some CMS scholars, examining notions such as: when are bodies made visible, when are they required to be invisible (and by whom/what), what categorizes specific bodies into specific hierarchies of (in)visibility, and when can (in)visibilities be used as tools of resistance or resiliency? This creation or production of (in)visibility is often framed in relation to a specific technology of power, with research examining “...the ways visibility and invisibility are constructed and managed in the context of migration governance, and with what effects on the target population.”¹⁹⁶ Thus, when examining the governance of *missingness* (a term that plays on notions of presence and absence, visibility and invisibility) in this thesis, we must turn to the CMS literature on (in)visibilities.

According to Rachel Humphris and Nando Sigona, the politics of inclusion and exclusion form the basis of invisibility. State practices of mapping and counting people (in this case called “institutional labelling”), and attaching a specific meaning to that labelling, entails exclusion through its very means of inclusion. For certain groups of people to be included and made visible through this labelling, “...refusal to name, count or recognize” others is inevitable in this process.¹⁹⁷ When unaccompanied minors registered as asylum-seekers (sometimes against their own will) in the United Kingdom “go missing,” the state is portrayed as the protector of these children (while other migrant children go unnoticed). Humphris and Sigona claim that “...for unaccompanied minors, going missing provokes a form of heightened visibility,”¹⁹⁸ as states strip themselves of any responsibility over the conditions that may

¹⁹⁵ Casper and Moore 2009, 3.

¹⁹⁶ Humphris and Sigona 2019, 1495.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1498-1499.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1510.

have led them to disappear (e.g., denial of the right to family reunification or the threat of deportation at the age of 18), and instead reinstate the claim that they know what is best for the child.¹⁹⁹ When comparing Humphris and Sigona's findings to the context of Sweden, this can, at first glance, appear confusing. Surely missing unaccompanied minors do not provoke a form of heightened visibility in Sweden, if even the United Nations criticized the country for its disinterest in their disappearances? Yet as will be examined in Chapter 5 to 7 of this thesis, visibilities are indeed provoked, produced and enacted when asylum-seekers go missing. Humphris and Sigona explain that unaccompanied minors seeking asylum are often made visible through being mapped and quantified. By "bureaucratically capturing" them, not only are specific obligations and rights enacted, but vulnerabilities are also constituted.²⁰⁰ Even through their disappearances/physical invisibility, a certain subject is produced when the state claims the need to reinstate its role in their governance.

(In)visibilities, however, do not solely need to be conceptualized in relation to physicality, as one can be made (in)visible conceptually through discourses produced by the state and its institutions.²⁰¹ Using the asylum-seeking context in Italy long before the "refugee crisis" of 2015, Raffaella Puggioni further distinguishes between conceptualizations of (in)visibilities, differentiating between being *institutionally (in)visible* and *politically visible*.²⁰² According to her research, the migration management apparatus in Italy did not enact a "public system of reception" for those seeking asylum. Asylum-seekers were viewed as needing assistance (to be provided by non-governmental organizations), rather than as the bearers of rights (to be recognized and enforced by the government). In the 1990s and leading up to specifically 1997, Kurdish would-be refugees were institutionally invisible as a result of this, often using Italy as a transit country on their way to northern European countries where a Kurdish diaspora was already established. This provoked reactions from other Schengen countries and in relation to the Dublin Convention, the Kurds transformed from being institutionally invisible to politically visible.²⁰³ Although Puggioni states that, "[t]hey were invisible, in the sense that their presence, survival strategies, rights and access to services were not approached as issues concerning political institutions, but rather the social network,"²⁰⁴ other scholars instead focus on how this invisibility can actually be used, by migrants, as a means of resistance to governance.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 1505.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Oelgemöller touches on the notion of being conceptually disappeared, but not physically disappeared. See: Oelgemöller 2017, 34.

²⁰² Puggioni 2005, 328.

²⁰³ Ibid., 325-328.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 331.

²⁰⁵ See, e.g.: Ansems de Vries 2016.

It can be concluded thus far that the following notion is replicated again and again in CMS research: the connection between visibility and governance, as “...refugees come into being by becoming visible as subjects to be governed” as this “...visibility constitutes a form of knowledge production that enables management and control...”²⁰⁶ This research often has its roots in a Foucauldian understanding of power, particularly disciplinary power, and the role of knowledge production,²⁰⁷ based on the premise that, “visibility is a trap.”²⁰⁸ Yet what happens when someone is indeed physically invisible to the gaze of the state/state institutions? Or as this thesis implores us to ask: can one be governed despite being physically missing? As much of the migration literature equates missing people/the disappeared with death,²⁰⁹ Christina Oelgemöller states, “...there is a technology to deal with the living and with the dead; the disappeared stay outside of the possibility of control.”²¹⁰ Her work is critical of the move to re-conceptualize these migrants as missing persons made by scholars who want to hold states accountable for migrant deaths, claiming that this move “...domesticates and governs this particular political subjectivity, but is also capable of endangering illegal migrants further because of the conceptual move that renders dead migrants both intelligible and incorporable into the 'normal' order.”²¹¹ Consequently, critical scholars may, against their best intentions, play an active role in establishing new categories for governance.

What can at times come across as confusing in the work of CMS scholars is when the term missing people is utilized to refer to those who have died because of the migration management apparatus, as previously shown, and when it instead refers to those who are, to use Puggioni's term, “institutionally invisible,” that is to say alive, undocumented and/or on the move. Oelgemöller refers to the latter as “...conceptually disappeared because they have no juridico-political markers of recognition.”²¹² Yet this leads one to wonder the following: if states relieve themselves of responsibility for those who are, in this case, “physically missing” (i.e. dead migrants), how does this affect the governance of those who are “conceptually disappeared” (to use Oelgemöller's terminology)? How do states respond to conceptual disappearances, if they are utilized as a form of resistance to visibility and recognition? One can also wonder whether state institutions (not just scholars and non-governmental organizations), such as in the case put forth by Humphris and Sigona, establish

²⁰⁶ Ansems de Vries 2016, 883.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 888-889.

²⁰⁸ Foucault cited in Ansems de Vries 2016, 888-889.

²⁰⁹ See, e.g.: Alonso and Nienass (eds.) 2016; in particular the featured articles in this special issue, such as those by: Alonso and Nienass 2016a; Ticktin 2016; Albahari 2016; and Edkins 2016. See also: Kovras and Robins 2016.

²¹⁰ Oelgemöller 2017, 33.

²¹¹ Ibid., 27-28.

²¹² Ibid., 31.

the category of the missing to “bureaucratically capture” and attempt to govern those who are conceptually disappeared. This move would place the “conceptually disappeared” within a larger category of governance and control, made visible through labelling and knowledge production. This thesis helps to answer some of these questions in Chapter 5, while delving into the role of (in)visibilities in the governance of missingness.

3.1.2 Control

In understanding how migration is governed, imperceptible conceptualizations of (in)visibilities may play a key role. Moving beyond solely relating visibility to disciplinary power, i.e., “...visibility beyond techniques and monitoring and surveillance...,” Martina Tazzioli and William Walters state, “...visibility in governmentality is not orientated- or at least not primarily- putting bodies under a surveilling gaze. Actually, it is more on the side of making reality knowable that visibility works in modern governmentality, as Foucault indirectly suggests in his passages on the emergence of statistics...”²¹³ When viewed in relation to the production and accumulation of knowledge by making things or people “intelligible” and thereby governable, “...it could be argued that visibility is at the core of governmentality.”²¹⁴ It can be conceived of as a strategic field, creating spaces of (in)visibility.²¹⁵ In relation to migration, we find states enacting and producing visibility both in relation to the control and surveillance of migrants and in relation to knowledge production (and often simultaneously).²¹⁶ The labelling/categorization of diverse migrant subjectivities by governments, and its role in producing “knowledge,” is often framed in the CMS literature as a way for states to attempt to impose control.²¹⁷ When it comes to border control specifically, these “...practices of control are routinely embedded in a practical sense that informs what controlling borders does and means.”²¹⁸

Before examining the CMS literature and the governance of migration, in particular, with regard to control, it must be mentioned that CSS scholars have been at the forefront of studying the enactment and production of visibility as a practice of migration/border control, pointing to the way in which discourses of migration and discourses of security have become dangerously intertwined. As Didier Bigo illuminates, it is by no means accidental that discourses of

²¹³ Tazzioli and Walters 2016, 447-448.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 448-449.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 454.

²¹⁷ See, e.g., Oelgemöller's analysis of 'pre-mature labelling': Oelgemöller 2011, 407-408. See also: McNevin 2014, 302.

²¹⁸ Bigo 2014, 209.

security have become interlaced with discourses of migration. The securitization of migration has grown out of an advancement and progression in surveillance and control technologies, gaining its momentum from that which these technologies enable.²¹⁹ It is a highly political move, a specific technology that feeds off the fears of politicians and the unease of citizens, "...used as a mode of governmentality by diverse institutions to play with the unease, or to encourage it if it does not exist, so as to affirm their role as providers of protection and security and to mask some of their failures."²²⁰ Bigo refers to this as the *governmentality of unease*,²²¹ and describes this form of governmentality as a *banopticon*, a spin-off of Bentham's panopticon as examined by Foucault in his analysis of disciplinary power.²²² For Bigo, the governmentality of unease is more than a phenomenon in which migrants are perpetually kept visible in the gaze of the sovereign, as with the panopticon. Instead, it takes the form of a banopticon, "...in which the technologies of surveillance sort out who needs to be under surveillance and who is free from surveillance, because of his profile."²²³ As a technology, it excludes rather than corrects, and it controls through its means of categorizing,²²⁴ as it is proliferated through routines and developed by specific (in)security professionals.²²⁵

Research belonging in the CSS literature, in particular, has traced how technologies of surveillance are exercised by institutions and security apparatuses as a tactic of biopower, playing an intricate role in the governing of specific populations and the production of specific knowledge. Biopolitics and surveillance are often seen as intertwined, as:

...the epistemologies associated with the biopoliticised securing of populations are concerned with surveillance and accumulation and analysis of data concerning behaviour, the patterns which behaviour displays and the profiling of individuals within the population. Instead of causal law, such power/knowledge is very much more concerned to establish profiles, patterns and probabilities.²²⁶

Often embedded in CSS and through the work of scholars such as Mark B. Salter, Giorgio Agamben, Jef Huysmans, Louise Amoore, Julien Jeandesboz, Laura J. Shepherd and Laura Sjoberg, this literature generally focuses on VISA and asylum regimes, fingerprint technologies and/or airport surveillance systems and their treatment of the body as both knowable and a bearer

²¹⁹ Bigo 2002, 71 & 74.

²²⁰ Ibid, 65.

²²¹ Bigo 2002.

²²² Foucault 1991a, 200.

²²³ Bigo 2002, 82.

²²⁴ Broeders 2009, 34.

²²⁵ Bigo 2007, 21.

²²⁶ Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 267.

of truth.²²⁷ Yet although one can observe the emergence of research originally nestled in surveillance studies, along with research often associated with migration studies and control, a limited amount of research exists that focuses on the “internal migration control of irregular migrants.”²²⁸ Broeders argues that if scholars choose to primarily focus on the state, their research risks ignoring existing modes of migrant resistance against these surveillance practices and controls.²²⁹ Although I most certainly agree with Broeders, I would also argue that if scholars choose to primarily focus on the state without demystifying the portrayal of the state itself, their research risks ignoring existing modes of resistance to these surveillance practices and controls, from *within* the state apparatus itself as well, as touched on in this thesis.

Because technologies of surveillance have a role in the gathering of information and thereby knowledge production,²³⁰ the population becomes “knowable” and measurable. Life becomes, as through biopolitics, something that must be understood, and its potentialities become predictable. Thus, when it comes to the governance of migration, CSS scholars have often examined how information is stored and consulted either through local or shared systems, such as the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (EURODAC) or the Schengen Information System (SIS). This research often examines how contemporary fingerprinting systems, which are now seen to capture “biological identities,” have sprung from a horrendous colonial past²³¹ and continue to be intertwined with racialized ways of “managing” specific populations. In this research, the site of the border often shifts from a geopolitical site of analysis, traditionally associated with sovereign territoriality, to a biopolitical one.²³² Bordering practices often transcend spatial and temporal boundaries, because fragments of an individual, such as their credit card records or past travel itineraries, can be judged and assembled into a pre-emptive and future security risk, before their body physically reaches a territorial border.²³³ Past movements and actions are thereby assembled into future potentialities, as individuals are classified and thereby governed as either “...objects of danger or benefit.”²³⁴ Similarly, assembled relationships are also found within the asylum regime, as the asylum-seeking process continuously relates the asylum-seeker to an assumed past and predictable future.²³⁵

²²⁷ See, e.g.: Salter 2006; Agamben 2011; Huysmans 2014; Amoore 2013; Jeandesboz 2016; Shepherd and Sjoberg 2012; and Bellanova and Fuster 2013.

²²⁸ Broeders 2009, 15.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

²³¹ Agamben 2011, 49-50.

²³² Vaughan-Williams 2015, 6-7.

²³³ Amoore 2013, 85-86.

²³⁴ Salter 2008, 378.

²³⁵ Puumala 2017, 102.

Consequently, surveillance becomes a necessary component in “assembling suspicion,” a term elaborated on by Huysmans through the work of Richard V. Ericson and Kevin D. Haggerty, as people are produced as subjects within this virtual world where data are shared, circulated and managed.²³⁶ This assemblage refers to “...the current interdependence of institutions that, together, can better count, monitor, evaluate, and oversee registration of migrants and their life capacities, as well as their risks...”²³⁷ That being said, when examining technologies, discourses, and/or logics of control within the migration management apparatus, CMS scholars not only often use the work of Foucault to explain empirical findings, but have often examined the governance of the physicality of the migrant, rather than the repercussions of their biological and digitalized identities. Control is thus often framed in relation to the technologies of power found in Foucault’s work, including modes of power such as disciplinary power, biopower, and pastoral power.²³⁸ When conducting an overview of the CMS field and its relationship to the notion of control, two trends emerge: literature examining the governance of temporalities and literature probing the governance of spatialities, often in the form of mobilities. These forms of governance, however, are often not mutually exclusive. For example, *the politics of exhaustion* is a term coined by Leonie Ansems de Vries and Elspeth Guild to describe how “...migrant trajectories are often characterized by recurring or continued displacement. The stretching over time and across spaces of this fractured and circulatory management of mobility is experienced as exhausting.”²³⁹

In the CMS literature reviewed here, the governance of temporalities is examined to a far lesser extent than the governance of spatialities, from asylum-seeking processes to the speed (or lack of speed) of VISA procedures privileging specific “categories” of migrants over others.²⁴⁰ According to Foucault, governing techniques include controlling time.²⁴¹ In the case of the Swedish asylum-seeking system and in interviews with caseworkers, not only are asylum-seekers’ previous movements/mobility traced in relation to time, but a tension emerges “...between the temporal limits of the governing institutions and the temporal desires of the migrants...”²⁴² as many asylum-seekers get

²³⁶ Huysmans 2014, 121 & 164.

²³⁷ Ticineto Clough and Wilse 2011, 9-10.

²³⁸ For scholars such as Doty and Wheatley, these modes of power are not mutually exclusive. Different tactics are found present in their analysis of private immigration detention centers in the US. See: Doty and Wheatley 2013, 429.

²³⁹ Ansems de Vries and Guild 2019, 2163.

²⁴⁰ As McNevin and Missbach state, “[t]hese techniques are designed to contain, deter, demoralise and/or immobilise would-be asylum-seekers, whose unauthorized mobility is considered disorderly, undesirable and risky from a migration management perspective.” See: McNevin and Missbach 2018, 15.

²⁴¹ Lilja et al. 2019, 144.

²⁴² Ibid., 153.

stuck in the “time of waiting” due to bureaucratic procedures.²⁴³ During this time there are often certain obligations that must be met if an individual is to receive, for example, financial assistance.²⁴⁴ In their research on the governance of temporalities (and spatialities), Anne McNevin and Antje Missbach write about the *humanitarianism of waiting*, a term used to explain the metamorphosis of what are traditionally seen as humanitarian spaces (refugee confinement) with the time of waiting within those spaces.²⁴⁵

One might assume, by examining different border controls and practices, that the goal of the migration management apparatus, especially after the “refugee crisis” of 2015, is to prevent, obstruct and contain certain people's movements, putting an end to what is often problematically portrayed as hypermobility and/or “nomadic behavior.”²⁴⁶ What is increasingly focused on in some of the CMS literature, however, is how these governmental acts and practices are not solely a consequence of the movements of people, but are instead utilized as techniques of governance, as “migrants' movements are controlled, disrupted and diverted not (only) through detention and immobility but by generating effects of containment keeping migrants on the move and forcing them to engage in convoluted geography.”²⁴⁷ What is portrayed as curtailing mobilities is simultaneously provoking mobilities. Martina Tazzioli calls this notion *governing migrant mobility through mobility*, as mobility is both an object of government and a technique of governing.²⁴⁸ Invisibility is used as a means to an end, because the goal of these measures is often not to surveil populations, but rather prevent, deter and obstruct any means of settlement.²⁴⁹ In contrast to the literature on the surveillance of migrants, these tactics paradoxically and actively hinder any chance of visibility.

Scholars drawing on Foucault, such as Tazzioli, can argue that this governance of mobilities is inseparable from the biopolitics of migration, as they entail “...a series of technologies, knowledges, and policies apt at regulating and acting upon life.”²⁵⁰ The CMS literature often examines “[n]otions such as control, protection, identification and registration” (all falling under the umbrella term of governance), but rarely investigates the relationship and interaction between political technologies of biopolitics, mobility and control.²⁵¹

²⁴³ Ibid., 155.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ McNevin and Missbach 2018, 28-29.

²⁴⁶ As stated by Ansems de Vries and Guild, “[t]he management of mobility thus consists of a range of practices of obstructing, containing and circulating movement, which prevent, fracture, complicate and prolong people's journeys to and across Europe.” See: Ansems de Vries and Guild 2019, 2157.

²⁴⁷ Tazzioli 2019a, 1; Similarly to this, Bigo argues that “[l]ogics of passage and mobility are stronger than logics of containment.” See: Bigo 2014, 213.

²⁴⁸ Tazzioli 2019a, 1-2.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 9.

²⁵⁰ Tazzioli 2019b, 1-2.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 10-11.

The idea *spaces of transit* is at times used to examine how the governance of mobilities (while not necessarily using that specific term) plays out.²⁵² Examining spaces of transits avoids a state-centric focus on “transit countries,”²⁵³ a term arguably used as a tool of governance in itself.²⁵⁴ Within these spaces, migrants are often continuously displaced as a result of the migration management apparatus. Yet despite these specific practices of control and disruption, political subjectivity can be located, as “...conventional conceptions of state and citizenship are challenged by the emergence of alternative living spaces, communities and politics.”²⁵⁵ Here, one could apply Rancière's ideas about politics, as according to him, politics is momentary and exists when the natural order of domination is disrupted by those who have no role to play.²⁵⁶ It can be found in these momentary exposures of resistance.

Many scholars in the field of CMS argue against cherry-picking Foucauldian concepts and instead advocate merging these concepts with new ones.²⁵⁷ Some also argue that the current Foucauldian readings of, for example, surveillance and control will problematically ignore the need to relate findings to both “...racialization and the postcolonial.”²⁵⁸ As Walters explains, “[w]hile analytics like biopolitics, discipline and neoliberalism offer all manner of insights, we need to avoid the trap which sees Foucault's toolbox as something ready-made for any given situation.”²⁵⁹ In line with this thought and by conducting fourteen in-depth interviews with border control actors, Bigo claims, for example, that we must avoid using biopolitics as “...an immanent cause or...as a causal determination of today's practices of border controls,” as it is “...not a structure, a paradigm, or an ideal type...”²⁶⁰ By using a socio-anthropological approach and examining the formative practices of dispositions, Bigo concludes that a change that goes beyond biopolitics is currently unfolding.²⁶¹

3.1.3 Care

Many critical theorists writing about migration remind us of the complexity that arises when discussions about migration are not only increasingly intertwined with discourses of security, but also discourses of humanitarianism,

²⁵² See, e.g.: Ansems de Vries and Guild 2019; and Oelgemöller 2011.

²⁵³ Ansems de Vries and Guild 2019, 2157.

²⁵⁴ Oelgemöller 2011, 416.

²⁵⁵ Ansems de Vries and Guild 2019, 2163.

²⁵⁶ Johnson 2013b, 87.

²⁵⁷ See, e.g.: Walters 2011, 139-140.

²⁵⁸ Moffette and Walters 2018, 94.

²⁵⁹ Walters 2011, 157-158.

²⁶⁰ Bigo 2014, 220.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

hospitality, and hostility.²⁶² When it comes to humanitarianism as a whole, Miriam Ticktin states that it is, "...far from soft; indeed, it can often end up hurting those it intends to help."²⁶³ Those deemed to be innocent (i.e., worthy of help) are demarcated from those deemed to be guilty (i.e., less worthy of help), as "...humanitarianism is about feelings rather than rights; it is about compassion, not entitlement... When migrants are spoken of as humanitarian victims, we take them out of the range of the law, where they have the *right* to be free from violence."²⁶⁴ Events that evoke discourses of humanitarianism, such as the "refugee crisis" of 2015, are typically framed as "sudden and unpredictable," thereby separated from historical narratives.²⁶⁵ As Liisa Malkki points out, "...the established practices of humanitarian representation and intervention are not timeless, unchangeable, or in any way absolute. On the contrary, these practices are embedded in long and complicated histories of their own..." including histories such as those of international law, histories of banishment and legal protection, histories of empires and colonial rule, and so forth.²⁶⁶ Consequently, humanitarianism is inseparable from specific contexts of time and space.²⁶⁷

As McNevin and Missbach state, "...humanitarianism has been integrated into the fabric of migration management."²⁶⁸ This opens up the idea of humanitarianism from one that has largely been associated with the actions of non-governmental organizations, to viewing it as "...a complex domain possessing specific forms of governmental reason,"²⁶⁹ where those demarcated as vulnerable are biopolitically regulated and controlled.²⁷⁰ Thus, CMS research has been at the forefront of explaining humanitarian governance as an intricate part of the governance of migration. This literature often highlights the tensions that emerge when migrants are not only framed as potential threats in themselves, but as simultaneously in need of protection, affecting how they are treated, controlled and disciplined.²⁷¹ Walters, for example, introduces the concept of the *humanitarian border* and explains that, if we are to understand both the birth of it and how it operates, we need to move beyond solely viewing it through the lens of biopower, although biopower is very much present. When it comes to the humanitarian border, different modes of power (such as that of biopower and that of pastoral power, as related to what Foucault explained as the "welfare state problem") are operating and different subjects

²⁶² See, e.g.: Bulley 2017; Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000; Ticktin 2016; and Danewid 2017.

²⁶³ Ticktin 2015.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Malkki 1996, 389.

²⁶⁷ Ticktin 2013.

²⁶⁸ McNevin and Missbach 2018, 29.

²⁶⁹ Walters 2011, 143.

²⁷⁰ See, e.g.: Butler et al. 2016, 5; and Feldman 2012, 156-157.

²⁷¹ Tazzioli 2019b, 1-2.

are produced. Humanitarian intervention not only produces subjects deemed to be vulnerable and in need of protection, but “...this move is also cross-cut with the presumption of subjects who are able, or are to be capacitated, to mobilize for themselves.”²⁷² Scholars such as Suzan Ilcan and Kim Rygiel emphasize the establishment of neoliberal governance and the neoliberal subject in contemporary refugee camps. As camps are increasingly becoming more permanent sites, refugees are biopolitically managed and transformed from aid recipients to neoliberal resilient subjects, “...expected not only to withstand adversity but also to thrive by becoming empowered and involved in the management of camp life.”²⁷³

Other scholars, such as Ticktin, emphasize the role of disciplinary power in understanding humanitarianism, as the state does not “act ‘altruistically’ in recognizing common humanity.”²⁷⁴ By examining these different technologies of power operating within humanitarian governance, we find that there is a “...double-sided nature of humanitarian governance concerned with care and control.”²⁷⁵ An increasing amount of literature has thus turned to Foucault’s later work, in which “...care is not counterpoised to control, but rather is deemed to lie at the heart of modern practices of governmentality.”²⁷⁶ Foucault’s development of the notion of pastoral power has contributed to a recent positioning of the notion of care as central in both psychology and political theory research. As social relations are reformulated “...in a neoliberal era characterized by the crisis of the welfare state and associated forms of dispossession,” care and control become increasingly difficult to untangle.²⁷⁷ In the governance of migration, we find “multi-stranded, tangled social relations and exchanges of care and control,”²⁷⁸ ranging from supportive to coercive relationships.²⁷⁹ Exchanges of care and control are organized and practiced in specific and contradictory ways.²⁸⁰ This is perhaps best exemplified through the coupling of humanitarianism with policing practices.²⁸¹ For example, Ticktin explains that both policing and humanitarianism are two sides of the same coin, as “[p]olicing is often accompanied by a gesture towards the humane, and towards the ethical...force is justified in the name of peace and right.”²⁸²

²⁷² Walters 2011, 152.

²⁷³ Ilcan and Rygiel 2015, 334.

²⁷⁴ Ticktin 2006, 40.

²⁷⁵ Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 53.

²⁷⁶ Johnson et al. 2020, 279.

²⁷⁷ Johnson and Lindquist 2020, 196-197.

²⁷⁸ Constable 2020, 329.

²⁷⁹ Johnson and Lindquist 2020, 195.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 203-204.

²⁸¹ Ticktin 2015.

²⁸² Ticktin 2005, 350 & 359.

In terms of humanitarian governance, by establishing the category of the innocent, the vulnerable, and those in need of protection (read: through compassion), a binary opposition is created: the category of the guilty (read: through criminalization and repression). In migration governance, this entails that traffickers are often seen as habituating the space of the guilty.²⁸³ In the case of the practices of Frontex-assisted Greek border police in Evros and at Frontex's headquarters, “humanitarianism is used for framing and giving meaning to institutional and operational practices,” enforcing the idea that there is, once again a “...double-sided nature of humanitarian governance concerned with care and control.”²⁸⁴ Not only are migrants policed in this context often framed as being in need of both care and control themselves, they are also framed as being in need of protection from the “bad guys,” i.e. criminal networks involved in smuggling/trafficking.²⁸⁵ According to Foucault, this tension between care and control (which can also be located in the tension between rescue missions and “pushback” missions) is what defines policing and sets it apart from institutions pre-occupied with defense, such as the military.²⁸⁶ This tension is not only found in the framing and/or practices of those given official police status within humanitarian governance, such as border police, but is also found in the discourses produced by other state employees working with migration management.

This is perhaps most visible in the discourses surrounding migrant children, as they “...embody an underlining and unresolved tension embedded in the handling of migration in liberal Western democracies: to protect the vulnerable whilst also protecting the borders of nation-states.”²⁸⁷ This tension between care and control is also examined in the CMS literature through Emma McCluskey’s research and her coining of the term: *the governance of righteousness*. According to McCluskey, a specific type of moral exceptionalism can be found in Sweden. This moral exceptionalism plays a role in producing a specific subject that is governable.²⁸⁸ By embedding herself with the local population of a small Swedish village, with mostly the volunteers there and newly arrived refugees in the village, McCluskey finds that refugees are indeed provided with a high standard of living, but in return are expected to play the role of the good refugee, never seen as equal to the Swedes, but instead “...as recipients of the benevolence of the good Swedes...,” a performance laden with notions of pastoral power and caring biopolitics.²⁸⁹ This mode of

²⁸³ Ticktin 2015.

²⁸⁴ Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 53.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 64-65.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 54 & 66.

²⁸⁷ Humphris and Sigona 2019, 1496.

²⁸⁸ McCluskey 2019, 23.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 103.

humanitarian governance within states once again categorizes lives according to “worthiness” of both protection and sacrifice.²⁹⁰

3.2 The missing subject in IR and the ambiguity of missingness

We have thus far examined the governance of migration as depicted in previous research, conducted by critical scholars, but this thesis is distinctly preoccupied with the governance of missingness within that sphere, and in particular missing asylum-seekers. When it comes to refugee determination systems, scholars such as Hardy argue that one must move beyond equating these systems with the discriminatory violence of the state, national borders and sovereignty, and also acknowledge the complexity of power at play in these interstices.²⁹¹ This thesis thereby proceeds on the assumption that the notion of missingness can be used to pry within these interstices and to wallow in these unknown crevices of bureaucratic procedures, helping us to examine different technologies of power. As “...missing persons disturb; their ambiguity deranges not only those who search for them, but also those who seek to impose administrative or political classifications or categorizations.”²⁹² The complexity of power is regenerated by examining in what ways the notion of missingness can disrupt logics of governance that are often organized around a dichotomy of presence and absence, as one is either included in a system or excluded from it.

The notions of the missing subject and missingness, both theoretically and empirically, are, ironically enough, often missing from IR research. The dichotomy of presence and absence, however, has many similarities with the dichotomy of life and death, as examined in the IR literature that deals specifically with biopolitics. Biopolitical research in IR has often drawn on the War on Terror for empirical leverage, as this research has prioritized and theorized life and death in different ways. Scholars such as Michael Dillon, Luis Lobo-Guerrero, and Julian Reid, for example, have investigated the theoretical and ontological positioning of life within biopolitics, and in relation to contemporary times.²⁹³ As Dillon states:

[t]he war on terror has intensified and amplified these characteristic features of the biopolitics of security, but it did not initiate or invent them. It baroquely proliferated them in a spiraling gyre of security and surveillance technologies.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 160.

²⁹¹ Hardy 2003, 462.

²⁹² Edkins 2011, 13.

²⁹³ See, e.g.: Dillon 2007, 2008, and 2015; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008; and Reid 2006.

The security problematic posed by biopolitics is, therefore, not that of violent death at the hands of other men. It is how to ‘make life live.’ But what has been happening to life?²⁹⁴

In different ways, scholars such as Dillon, Lobo-Guerrero, and Reid relate to the question posed: what, indeed, has been happening to the notion of life? According to this research, circulation becomes the logic in which biopolitics operates,²⁹⁵ and is itself a site where governing institutions monitor and regulate different flows.²⁹⁶ Biopolitical security techniques are not only concerned with the accumulation of either territory or resources, but attempt to govern circulation and flows, and thereby the referent object of life.²⁹⁷

On the other hand, scholars such as Elizabeth Dauphinee and Cristina Masters draw on the War on Terror empirically, their aim being to question the ontology of life by primarily focusing on the biopolitical technologies that result in death. In their research, death is seen as something in relation to what it is not: life, rather than vice versa. In this sense, the security problematic posed by biopolitics does, indeed, become that of violent death at the hands of other men.²⁹⁸ In their edited volume *The Logics of Biopower and the War on Terror: Living, Dying, Surviving*, each chapter is related to the second part of the sovereign mantra according to Foucault: make live and *let die*, as “[b]iopolitics hides its death-producing activities under the rhetoric of making live.”²⁹⁹ By examining this, their aim is to recover “...the lives that are caught in the logics of sovereign biopower”³⁰⁰ as “[i]t is death that exposes the biopolitical project of sovereign life.”³⁰¹ Yet what about missingness, where neither life nor death can be confirmed? A state in which one might be conceptually visible but physically missing?

Despite this theorization of life and death in IR research, as well as the overall missingness of the missing from IR research, certain themes do appear when we conduct a literature review on missing asylum-seekers in general. Scholars writing on the topic are often immersed in fields ranging from social anthropology to geography, organization studies and critical IR.³⁰² Jenny Edkins’ research, which critically assesses the actions of authorities meant to deal

²⁹⁴ Dillon 2015, 49.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ See, e.g.: Dillon 2015.

²⁹⁷ Dillon 2007, 45.

²⁹⁸ Dauphinee and Masters 2007, xi-xiii.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., xiii.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., viii.

³⁰¹ Ibid., xiii.

³⁰² In regard to social anthropology, see, e.g.: Khosravi 2010; and in regard to geography, see, e.g.: Sigvardsdotter 2013; For Foucauldian inspired organization studies and refugee determination systems, see, e.g.: Hardy 2003; and Phillips and Hardy 1997. Additionally, Wettergren combines an organizational approach with analyzing the emotional regime of the SMA (see: Wettergren 2010).

with missing people, is leading the way. Edkins states, “[w]hen people go missing, their relatives demand action. A particular, unique, irreplaceable person has disappeared, and they want that person back. No one else will do. However, for the authorities who are supposed to act, there is really no such thing as an irreplaceable person: one person is for most purposes equivalent to another of the same sort.”³⁰³ Edkins’ research on missing persons is often placed within a context more aligned with “involuntary” disappearances, from those missing after the collapse of the Twin Towers to the unidentified bodies of dead migrants,³⁰⁴ but her research often draws on biopolitics and how we are, through the actions of governing bureaucracies, produced as bare life.³⁰⁵ Yet she also poses the question, “I have talked about the missing; what about the unmissed? Not all those who are missing are reported.”³⁰⁶ She uses asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom who disappear in order to avoid deportation as an example of those who are “...the missing, missing, the doubly missing,”³⁰⁷ meaning “...those who are not present to a Western imagination in the first place, those who are invisible to many scholars of international relations, with its focus on the world seen from a particular perspective, as if that were the only one.”³⁰⁸

When missingness is mentioned in IR, it is often equated with those migrants/asylum-seekers who have lost their lives as a result of violent bordering practices and/or with the concept of bare life.³⁰⁹ This is often related to a politics of mourning and a politics of grievability versus non-grievability.³¹⁰ This thesis hopes to go beyond previous research that equates the missing subject with the concept of Agamben’s bare life.³¹¹ By equating missingness with bare life, we may “...deprive ourselves of the lexicon we need to understand the other networks of power to which it belongs, or how power is recast in that place or even saturated in that place.”³¹² For example, Achille Mbembe’s introduction of the notion of *necropower*, a combination of Foucault’s “take life

³⁰³ Edkins 2011, viii.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.; and Edkins 2016.

³⁰⁵ Edkins 2008, 211; Additionally, according to Agamben, sovereign power produces, through its orderings on which forms of life are worthy of living and which are not, something entitled bare life. Bare life is “...the life of a homo sacer (sacred man), who may be killed and yet not sacrificed...” The homo sacer is therefore between an inside and an outside, between life and death. See: Agamben 1998, 8.

³⁰⁶ Edkins 2011, 5.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 6.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 5-6.

³⁰⁹ See, e.g.: Doty 2007, 13.

³¹⁰ See, e.g.: Alonso and Nienass (eds.) 2016; Kovras and Robins 2016; and Perera 2006.

³¹¹ See, e.g.: Edkins 2008; Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004; Doty 2007; and Vaughan-Williams 2009. For CMS research that problematizes the usage of Agamben’s bare life, see, e.g.: Ansems de Vries 2016; and Johnson 2013b.

³¹² Butler and Spivak 2007, 42-43.

and let live” and Agamben’s bare life, has been influential in the field,³¹³ in particular for those examining deaths at the border.³¹⁴ Mbembe analyzes how death structures the idea of sovereignty and extends Foucault’s analysis of racism and biopolitics. He is influential in acknowledging slavery as one of the first historical instances of biopolitical experimentation and develops the term necropolitics to mean “...contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death.”³¹⁵ Most of the research focusing on missingness, as equated with the deaths of migrants and asylum-seekers, often analyzes the site of border landscapes between the United States of America and Mexico, or the site of the Mediterranean Sea and the way in which “...this maritime space of exception is produced...”³¹⁶

States are criticized for deflecting their responsibility for these deaths,³¹⁷ while political activist groups are hailed for their attempts to bring these bodies into a sphere of visibility, as they go “...beyond the temporality of emergency to include the timelessness of death, and as such, they demand accountability and responsibility.”³¹⁸ The notion of missingness is often analyzed, if it is analyzed at all, as a *consequence* or *effect* of violent logics of governance, rather than examining in what ways the notion of missingness can challenge logics of governance, as examined in this thesis. For Edkins, however, the unidentified bodies of those migrants challenge the biopolitical logic of the state. This is because bureaucracy cannot call for one’s identity in the form of “name, residence, citizenship, and date of birth,” to be made present. She states, “[n]ames without bodies and bodies without names disrupt and challenge the usual practices and demand something else.”³¹⁹ Yet once the body is identified when possible, they are reabsorbed into the system, shifting subjectivities from being a potential threat to state orderings, to becoming “a passive object.”³²⁰ This leads us into the final part of this section, which discusses the theoretical ambiguity of missingness as discussed in the research field.

The literature on missing asylum-seekers in general, when not focusing on death, is often linked with the term “undocumented migrants/persons,” focusing on topics such as conceptualizations of (il)legality, humanitarian issues such as access to healthcare and basic human rights, and/or embodied migrant experiences.³²¹ Research investigating spatial conceptualizations of absence/presence, spaces of (in)existence, and questions of the co-existence of

³¹³ Campbell and Sitze 2013, 26.

³¹⁴ See, e.g.: Castro 2016.

³¹⁵ Mbembe 2013, 186.

³¹⁶ Perera 2006, 638.

³¹⁷ Alonso and Nienass 2016b, xxv.

³¹⁸ Ticktin 2016, 267-268.

³¹⁹ Edkins 2016, 359-360.

³²⁰ Ibid., 378.

³²¹ See, e.g.: De Genova 2002 and 2013; Hellgren 2014, and Khosravi 2010 and 2011.

concepts, such as exclusion/inclusion, represent reoccurring themes in the literature.³²² Similar themes are often found in the literature focusing specifically on Sweden. This literature is often migrant-centered and generally equates missing asylum-seekers with those who have made, or felt forced to make, the difficult decision to go missing, while analyzing the violent repercussions enacted by the refugee determination system.³²³ Social anthropologist Shahram Khosravi's research on embodied experiences of illegality, while simultaneously questioning the discourse of illegality, is at the forefront of the research produced on Sweden, alongside the research of Erika Sigvardsdotter.³²⁴ The different perceptions of missingness represented in this research remind us that scholars must be careful in depicting the missing, especially in the case of undocumented persons, as a collective group. As research shows that these individuals are often depicted as a homogenous group through state identification and tracing systems,³²⁵ scholars should be careful in their research to avoid reproducing missing asylum-seekers (a term that often already confines and represents the individual as belonging to not one, but two submerged collective groups) as a group with homogenous reasons for disappearing and/or homogenous embodied experiences of missingness.

Yet considering the missingness of the missing in IR research and the ambiguity of the term (i.e., who is labeled as missing and when), one can consult current research in the field of social and cultural geographies, to gain insight into the notion of missingness through a theoretical lens. Lars Frers states, "[t]he problem with accounts of absence is that they implicitly or explicitly use absence as 'the other,' the opposite, the unknown, the spectral, the immaterial. Absence is posited as something that derives its inherent quality from the fact that it is beyond mere materiality, beyond the body and its embeddedness in the physical world."³²⁶ In their work on missingness within the United Kingdom, Hester Parr, Olivia Stevenson, Nick Fyfe, and Penny Woolnough, explore "...the paradoxical qualities of present but absent spatialities," as those who disappear from a specific space often simultaneously

³²² See, e.g.: Sigvardsdotter 2013; De Genova 2002 and 2013; Khosravi 2010 and 2011; and Isin and Rygiel 2007.

³²³ By this I mean that the literature focusing on asylum-seekers in Sweden often engages with individuals who have had their asylum-claims rejected and subsequently live undocumented in Sweden. One could argue that reasons such as these would be portrayed as "voluntary" disappearances by the state, rather than, for example, human trafficking cases, portrayed as "involuntary" disappearances. However, portraying this as a clear-cut difference is highly problematic.

³²⁴ See, e.g.: Khosravi 2009, 2010, and 2011; and Sigvardsdotter 2013.

³²⁵ Edkins cited in Parr et al. 2015, 205.

³²⁶ Frers quoted in Parr et al. 2015, 192.

reappear in another.³²⁷ They attempt to address the abstract qualities of absences (or missingness), merging theoretical conceptualizations with both concrete materialities and corporal certainties.³²⁸

That being said, disappearances and missing quickly become terms, through their abstractedness, that embody more than the purely corporeal certainties. Although not necessarily looking at asylum-seekers who have gone missing, in their work on missing people in the United Kingdom, Parr et al. found that those whom they had interviewed who had gone missing had often rejected the term “missing person” as an identifier, “...understanding themselves instead to be merely *absent in practice*.”³²⁹ It appears that in no way are the terms used to describe those who have gone missing as straight-forward or clear as institutions would like to depict them to be. Since 2013, for example, some police forces in England and Wales have started making a distinction between the term missing and the term absent. This distinction entails that a missing person is defined, by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), as “anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established, and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject to a crime or at risk of harm,” whereas an absent person is “a person who is not at a place where they are expected, or required to be.”³³⁰ In the distinction outlined above, a missing person will consequently lead officers to conduct a search and investigation, whereas an absent person will be treated as an incident that needs to be monitored.³³¹ Missing appears to be, in this context, something you are or something that is out of character in relation to who you *are*, whereas absentness is something of an event or practice.

It should be noted, however, that these definitions do not account for the presence of agency within certain disappearances. In interviews with those having been or gone missing in the United Kingdom, and whose disappearances were in accordance with free will, it was found that “...people use absence as a tangible way to create time and space where it might be possible to resolve difficult or traumatic feelings” and that “[t]hese feelings are often linked to a sense of control for many interviewees, whose absence was all about ‘getting control back again’...”³³² According to a report from 2017 by the Children’s Ombudsman in Sweden, a conclusion was drawn from many interviews with missing unaccompanied minors indicating that disappearances “...can be a way for the child to take control over their own life or a

³²⁷ Parr et al. 2015, 191.

³²⁸ Parr et al. 2015.

³²⁹ Ibid., 196.

³³⁰ Ibid., 204.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid., 196.

reaction to fear and insecurity.”³³³ Previous research has also claimed that many unaccompanied minors will disappear after having received a negative decision on their asylum application, and that those who go missing for this reason often “...feel that there is a great lack of institutional knowledge about their situation.”³³⁴ The ambiguities of how these terms are interpreted and how they are later conceptualized through institutional practices reinforce once again how a focus on missingness may indeed point to the “...slippages and breakages, shifts and revisions,”³³⁵ that can occur within governing logics.

3.3 Concluding remarks on the literature reviewed

As previously stated, regarding the governance of migration, the CMS literature tends to examine the power *of* life in relation to the agency of migrants and their modes of resistance,³³⁶ meaning that research is often migrant-centric. Scholars will often examine how power operates within specific regimes of practices, as well as the effects that are produced, but will rarely engage with those employed to work within the migration management apparatus, and the discourses that these employees produce in their daily practices. When it comes to surveillance studies, for example, Smith states that “...there is a distinct scarcity of empirical and theoretical attention focused on the activities and roles of those actually operating the various technologies of security in existence. This is a critical omission, as the everyday actions and behaviours of such individuals significantly affect the overall *practice of surveillance*, a key substantive topic assumed in much theory.”³³⁷ A similar conclusion can be drawn from the governance of migration literature. By interacting with CCTV operators, Smith found that they were “...simultaneously empowered, disempowered and re-empowered” as “...power within such workplace settings is a fluid, indefinite and ambiguous property.”³³⁸ The state employee as a subject is also produced, albeit in relation to the asylum-seeker, and “[e]ven though individual officers can in their daily work adopt practices that disrupt sovereign imaginaries, they cannot escape their position as representatives of the state.”³³⁹

³³³ Barnombudsmannen 2017, 10 (note: my own translation of the quote from Swedish to English).

³³⁴ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2016b, 37 (note: my own translation of the quote from Swedish to English).

³³⁵ Dillon 2015, 47.

³³⁶ Vaughan-Williams 2015, 8.

³³⁷ Smith 2009, 125.

³³⁸ Ibid., 126.

³³⁹ Puumala 2017, 69.

Scholars such as Puumala argue that, in the field of migration studies, we need to look at the daily practices that uphold the apparatus of the state, whether they be disciplinary, bureaucratic or mundane. This would help to demystify the very notion of the state, and to “...undermine the notion of the state as ‘structural,’ beyond people’s control and a unitary disembodied entity.”³⁴⁰ One way of demystifying and further complicating the portrayal of the state is by interacting with state employees and examining the informal discourses they produce, through examination of their attempts to govern missingness, as done in this thesis. By examining missingness through the perspective of state employees, as is done in this thesis, not only can we create the possibility to find “...inherent contradictions, ambiguities, gaps, blind spots and limitations,”³⁴¹ but we may also be able to find unique pockets of resistance within state institutions, thereby slowly contributing to the dismantling of the state as a self-existent, all-seeing, all-knowing, all-controlling, well-oiled entity. It should also be noted that according to Walters, a focus on the microphysics of power, that is to say the capillaries of power, no matter how mundane, can expand our understanding of how governance works.³⁴² The mundanity of the everyday can therefore be far more interesting than we may initially expect. If we examine the microphysics of power and regimes of practices as well as their operations, we can also find sites of contestation and resistance, and with this comes the possibility of change,³⁴³ contributing to the current research.

As outlined in the literature review, when examining the governance of migration, scholars have observed different technologies of power operating and manifesting, from disciplinary power to biopower and pastoral power. In sum, visibility appears to be at the core of governmentality, enabling governance through management and control, as migrants are made visible through quantifying and labeling, kept visible through centers and camps, and made invisible through forced mobilities. Although we are introduced to the idea of controlling the conceptual and digital individual through fingerprints and the production of risk assemblages in the CSS literature, the CMS literature tends to examine how the physicality of the individual is governed, through the control of both temporalities and spatialities. Yet, as this literature review shows, notions of both control and care can be intertwined, especially when migration governance is framed through discourses of humanitarianism. Despite the CMS field covering a broad range of topics, research on how missingness, as an inbetweenness involving not being fully present or absent within a system, can pose challenges for those working at state institutions and their governing logics is missing from the IR literature. This thesis therefore hopes to move

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁴¹ Broeders 2009, 54.

³⁴² Walters 2017, 65.

³⁴³ Dean 2010, 49.

beyond equating missing asylum-seekers with death, and instead delve into what this inbetweenness can tell us about the relationship between governance and missingness and the different technologies of power found operating within this site.

4. Research Design

This chapter outlines the research design for this thesis and comprises two main components: a reflexive account of my methodology and my choice of methods. Section 4.1 outlines the reasons for selecting Sweden as a case for this thesis. Section 4.2 demarcates the need for reflexivity throughout the research process, aligning with the belief that we are indeed embedded in the world that we wish to examine, which affects our choice of field sites, research aims, research questions, processes of data collection, and so forth. We are also embedded within the politics of our research design. A critical methodology in this thesis entails that I reflect on the consequences of occupying an insider-outsider position in my study. The consequences of occupying this position are illuminated in Section 4.3, where I outline how interviews with state employees comprised the material examined in this thesis, including how interviewees were accessed, how interviews were conducted, and the politics of language within these interactions. Embracing the mess that often results from interviewing, through personal reflections, emotions and contradictions, allows one to move beyond official state narratives. Section 4.4 delves into how this mess is embraced in the empirical chapters by delineating the choice of methods for this thesis: a Foucauldian-inspired analysis of discourse. After outlining the theoretical underpinnings of discourse and how discourses are examined according to Michel Foucault, Section 4.5 explains how a Foucauldian understanding of discourse is engaged with as a toolbox to examine the material, as discourses are produced, repeated, and reiterated by state employees.

4.1 Case selection

Why choose to examine discourses surrounding the notion of missingness in Sweden, of all places? Sweden is an interesting case with regard to the asylum regime as a whole.³⁴⁴ It is often portrayed as a “destination country” for asylum-seekers. Considering the country’s number of asylum applications despite

³⁴⁴ For research on Sweden’s history of migration, see, e.g.: Byström and Frohnert (eds.) 2013; Byström and Frohnert 2017; Byström 2014; Bexelius 2001; Eastmond 2011; and Svanberg 2017. For research on migration and citizenship in Sweden, see, e.g.: Bevelander and Spång

its geographical location in Europe, one would assume that disappearances in Sweden would be less expected compared to those in so-called “transit countries.” Unless arrival in Sweden is by airplane, asylum-seekers arriving from outside Europe will often have to travel through what are considered transit countries such as Italy or Greece.³⁴⁵ However, a report by the European Migration Network (EMN) stated that “[f]or the first time, Sweden also became a transit country during the autumn months of 2015, as several thousand asylum seekers passed through Sweden to reach Finland or Norway.”³⁴⁶ In addition to often being referred to as a destination country, its performative image as a “humanitarian superpower” has recently come under scrutiny, sparking headlines in internationally renowned newspapers, such as: “Even Europe’s humanitarian superpower is turning its back on refugees”³⁴⁷ and “Sweden slams shut its open-door policy towards refugees.”³⁴⁸ During what (problematically) became dubbed as the “refugee crisis,” asylum policies and practices quickly changed. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven gave a speech to the Swedish public in September 2015, stating, “[m]y Europe doesn’t build walls.” However, a mere two months after this speech, Löfven stated in a speech in November 2015, that “[w]e simply can’t do any more,” as borders were tightened and stricter asylum policies were put in place. A couple months after the November 2015 speech, the Prime Minister explained that, “[t]he government now considers that the current situation, with a large number of people entering the country in a relatively short time, poses a serious threat to public order and national security.”³⁴⁹

Despite the enactment of a stricter asylum regime and the implied links between migration and security, Sweden is also often regarded as “a highly controlled, comprehensive welfare state.”³⁵⁰ It is said that Foucault’s own experience of living in Sweden in the late 1950s shaped much of his philosophical thinking, as “...he observed that despite Sweden’s reputation as a freer country than France (i.e. less social restrictions), a certain kind of freedom may have as many restrictive effects as a directly restrictive society.”³⁵¹ As Carly Elizabeth Schall states, Sweden “...is for many the go-to case of a fully realized welfare state,” as “[i]t provides cradle-to-grave social services on the basis of citizenship, not need, and has high levels of de commodification, redistribution, and taxation.”³⁵² The “...main organizing cultural principle” of

2008. For research on the creation of the Swedish “self” in relation to migration, see, e.g.: McCluskey 2019.

³⁴⁵ See, e.g., the map provided by: International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2017.

³⁴⁶ European Migration Network (EMN) 2018, 12.

³⁴⁷ Witte and Faiola 2015.

³⁴⁸ Crouch 2015.

³⁴⁹ McCluskey 2019, 176.

³⁵⁰ Hellgren 2014, 1179.

³⁵¹ *Counterpoints* 1997, 241.

³⁵² Schall 2016, 4.

the Swedish welfare state is often traced back to the concept of the People's Home (*folkhemmet*), a concept widely disseminated through a speech held by Social Democratic Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson in 1928.³⁵³ Sweden was to become a "good home" for a single unified family, i.e. the Swedish nation, and no one was to be "left behind."³⁵⁴ In the years of Social Democratic rule following this, the People's Home came to include universal health care, free universal state child care, free higher education, and socialized housing. According to journalist Andrew Brown, the introduction of the People's Home kept "...Sweden's strict sense of communal order- with the same sense that everyone, rather than a single Big Brother, was watching you all the time- while changing the underlying dogma, substituting the authority of science and the hope of progress for the authority of God and the hope of salvation."³⁵⁵ This has inevitably, albeit through various waves, shaped "...Swedish political consciousness" as we know it today.³⁵⁶

The evolution of the People's Home as an organizing principle of Swedish society has been celebrated by those who find it to be "...built on values of universalism and individual rights," but also critiqued by Foucauldian-inspired historians due to its "...utopian legacies of social engineering."³⁵⁷ In the 1960s, the Swedish Left could be heard critiquing it "...as a bureaucratized model of social engineering and as a version of...authoritarian society."³⁵⁸ A similar critique, albeit with a neoliberal twist, could be heard from the Swedish Right a decade later.³⁵⁹ As Schall reminds us, today, "[t]he welfare machine itself works on, but it is showing all the signs of aging. Some of its parts have worn out and have had to be jury-rigged. Others have been replaced- perhaps unnecessarily."³⁶⁰ What unites these analyses of the Swedish welfare state is their representation of societal control, regardless of whether this control is understood as positive, negative, or somewhere in between. It also demarcates who is deemed to belong, and who is not, who is present within the system, and who is not, as the "...welfare state cannot function unbounded."³⁶¹ Concerning questions of migration, scholars such as Stephen Castles and Mark

³⁵³ Ibid., 5, 36 & 56.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 36 & 5.

³⁵⁵ According to Brown, Sweden has a rather authoritarian history of curtailing personal liberties. For example, alcohol was rationed in 1919-1955 according to age, class, and sex. Until 1951, one could also only choose between 11 officially approved religious beliefs, and being an atheist was not one of them. See: Brown 2018.

³⁵⁶ Andersson 2009, 232.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 230.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 236.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Schall 2016, 186.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 7-8.

Miller argue that social-democratic states are more likely to aim for an “interventionist” integration strategy, as a “...commitment to a universalist welfare state requires that immigrants be drawn into the system.”³⁶²

Sweden is an interesting case to look at, as it functions through the logics of subjecting one to a system of bureaucracy, which in turn entails many opportunities for control. For example, in Sweden today, one often needs a personal identity number within the system to access most institutions.³⁶³ Asylum-seekers in Sweden are formally incorporated into and made present within the system, thereby also accessing certain rights associated with a welfare state. After their asylum claims are investigated, the system decides whether or not they are to be fully incorporated as a resident (and potential future citizen) or to be expelled. So, what happens when asylum-seekers are incorporated into the system and disappear before the state makes the decision or carries out the decision made regarding their continued incorporation or their expulsion? That there are no exact figures on how many undocumented migrants reside in the country is, according to Zenia Hellgren, “particularly problematic” for a country such as Sweden.³⁶⁴

State employees working within the SMA, social services, and the police were chosen for this case, as they partake in a “contemporary system of political management based on the administration of populations.”³⁶⁵ These state employees are of importance to this study because they play a central role in the Swedish asylum regime and encounter asylum-seekers on a daily basis and through all (non-linear) stages of disappearances, from arrival, to disappearance and reappearance.³⁶⁶ It is also possible for all three of these institutions to be, or to have been, involved in the same case. Employees at the SMA, for example, oversee the actual asylum-seeking process for adults, families, and unaccompanied minors, while social workers are mainly involved in questions of welfare regarding unaccompanied minors in the asylum process. The police are often involved in questions of deportation, as the final part of the asylum-seeking process, when one is no longer officially considered “an asylum-seeker.”

In this thesis, I have chosen to limit the scope of interviews to those working within the asylum regime, which inevitably risks “...flattening migrant stories and experiences into abstract generalities.”³⁶⁷ Recent scholarly work in

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 20-21.

³⁶³ The final four digits in one’s Swedish personal identity number are given either upon birth as a Swedish citizen or when one has obtained a residence permit and is registered in the Swedish Population Register. See: Skatteverket (no date).

³⁶⁴ Hellgren 2014, 1179.

³⁶⁵ Edkins 2011, viii.

³⁶⁶ To read the official SMA narrative on the asylum-seeking process in Sweden, see: Migrationsverket 2017a.

³⁶⁷ Johnson 2013a, 67.

migration studies has increasingly stressed the need to amplify the lived experiences of migrants,³⁶⁸ as told by migrants themselves, as this:

...enables us to give context and content to the policies that govern cross-border migration as well as the everyday lives of migrants who encounter (or avoid) security personnel, who live in camps, reception centers, and detention centers...and who challenge state frameworks and law, revealing the politics of security, citizenship, and mobility that shape key parts of our contemporary world.³⁶⁹

Migrants' resistance to different technologies of governance is increasingly being examined within the scholarly research.³⁷⁰ This thesis acknowledges the unprecedented importance of research such as this, while simultaneously making a case for the need to also examine relations of power (and potentials for resistance) *within* the state (in this case, within state institutions), dismantling our pre-conceived notions of the logics of the state and the idea that it is a self-existing entity. As Wanda Vrasti states, "[t]he end goal would be to make high theory, the usefulness of which I am still convinced of, amendable to personal reflection and political action."³⁷¹ Even though this thesis is specifically tied to the context of Sweden, my hope is that the theoretical questions raised in this thesis, regarding how missingness and governance relate to one another, will inspire further work within migration research.³⁷²

4.2 Reflections on reflexivity

As researchers, we are not only inseparable from the questions we ask, but also from the field that we engage with, as even our field sites are often chosen "...depending on where our 'intellectual interests, personal predilections, and career outcomes can most happily intersect'."³⁷³ Many scholars adopting theories and practices deemed critical within the field of IR would agree with the notion that, as researchers, we forever haunt the corridors of our own projects

³⁶⁸ See, e.g.: Johnson 2013b; McNevin 2013; Doty 2010; and Squire et al. 2021.

³⁶⁹ Johnson 2016, 383.

³⁷⁰ See, e.g.: Ansems de Vries 2016; Sigvardsdotter 2013; Broeders 2009; and Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004.

³⁷¹ Vrasti 2013, 60.

³⁷² In his article *Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research*, Flyvbjerg claims that "[a] purely, descriptive, phenomenological case study without any attempt to generalize can certainly be of value in this process [*of knowledge accumulation*] and has often helped cut a path toward scientific innovation." He emphasizes that there are limitations "...which follow when formal generalization becomes the only legitimate method of scientific inquiry" (see: Flyvbjerg 2006, 227). Hence, on this aspect, I choose to side with the work of Flyvbjerg.

³⁷³ Vrasti 2010, 84.

and are part of the stories we tell, thereby resisting the golden rule we are taught early on in our methodology training: "...the writer must be absent from his/her own work in order to be considered legitimate."³⁷⁴ Being a present force in the research one produces and the writing one manifests does not come with a clear methodology checklist³⁷⁵ of "do this" and "don't do that," but it does allow us to embody creativity in order to be transparent, reflective, brave, and curious, in the eyes of the readers, those we engage with in the field, and ourselves, as we actively stop disassociating ourselves from our research designs. Vrasti argues, for example, that "[n]o matter how we go about collecting our data, the most powerful methodological tool in all social research remains *writing*. It is in writing that the fantasy of valid truth is produced, by taking ourselves out of our projects, treating the world around us as evidence and subsuming social reality to explanatory methods and theories."³⁷⁶ At the end of the day, adopting a writing style that is devoid of a voice in order to portray neutrality and objectivity is, as Roxanne Lynn Doty argues, itself "highly political."³⁷⁷

Hence, it is through methodologies that adopt a lens of criticality and thanks to the pioneering work of feminist scholars, that we are regularly introduced to the importance of both positionality and reflexivity. Feminist research, in particular, has been at the forefront of inspiring us to ask difficult questions in order to better our research projects and do less harm, to use our privileged positions as academics to focus on hierarchies and exclusions, and to realize the political as it is embedded in our everyday lived realities.³⁷⁸ According to Mark B. Salter, the positionality of one's research can alter the actual research design in a number of ways. This includes "...the personal position of the research in wider political and social structures of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality," affecting "...one's unquestioned assumptions, one's access, and the way that others relate."³⁷⁹ Other positionalities include one's institutional position, which affects opportunities for funding or imposed funding restraints,³⁸⁰ as well as "...the question of *intellectual* disposition, the self-positioning of an expert, observer, students, etc., separate and distinct from the world."³⁸¹

Similar to aspects of positionality, the research process itself affects the research object/situation, encouraging us to adopt practices of reflexivity, as

³⁷⁴ Doty 2010, 1047-1048.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1049.

³⁷⁶ Vrasti 2010, 86.

³⁷⁷ Doty 2004, 378.

³⁷⁸ See, e.g.: Enloe 1990; Cohn 2011; Vrasti 2010; Ackerly and True 2008; and Wibben 2016.

³⁷⁹ Salter 2013b, 20.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

“[r]eflexivity makes us think about the (power) relations between the researcher and the researched, and the political nature of research,”³⁸² and our situatedness as researchers.³⁸³ As Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True ask, “[h]ow can we study power and identify ways to mitigate its abuse in the real world when we, as international relations researchers, also participate in the powerful projection of knowledge in this world?”³⁸⁴ A *reflexive* practice should also entail acknowledging the historical context of the term “research” itself, as it is linked to European colonialism and imperialism, and how one’s *positionality* as a “knowledge producer” (in my case: as a white woman in a Western academic setting) has deep roots in systemic and epistemic violence,³⁸⁵ with contemporary ethical and political consequences. Because scholarly knowledge is not value neutral, it “...needs to be understood as embedded in its contexts of production, which include the research subject’s location in time, space, body and historical and societal power relations as well as the research technologies as part of the research process.”³⁸⁶

This approach aligns with the notion that “...a critical research design should open up inquiry, privileging the questioning rather than the answering, the doubt rather than the certainty that comes with an entrenchment in disciplinary practices.”³⁸⁷ Although I have continuously had an inner-dialogue concerning how my race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationalities have affected the trajectories of this project, I have chosen to focus the remainder of my methodology section on my subject position as an insider-outsider within this project, due to my previous employment at the SMA. My previous intimacy with the research topic has inevitably influenced the research process. Consequently, I also hope that, by changing the style of writing in this methodology section in comparison to the rest of the thesis, I will enable a new form of intimacy, as vulnerabilities are unveiled, “...in order to make ourselves accountable for the situatedness of our knowledge production.”³⁸⁸ The “...hunches, tensions, or disjunctions in my own life”³⁸⁹ have guided me throughout the research process, from why I decided to engage with the notion of missingness, to what material was chosen, how that material was gathered, and what language was used. J. Ann Tickner explains that “[a]cknowledging the subjective element in one’s analysis, which exists in all social science research, actually increases the objectivity of the research.”³⁹⁰

³⁸² Kunz 2013, 63.

³⁸³ Ackerly and True 2008, 694-699.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 694.

³⁸⁵ Wibben 2016, 10.

³⁸⁶ Haraway cited in Koobak and Thapar-Björkert 2014, 50.

³⁸⁷ Guillaume 2013, 31.

³⁸⁸ Koobak and Thapar-Björkert 2014, 60.

³⁸⁹ Tamas 2009, 60.

³⁹⁰ Tickner 2006, 27.

I began working at the SMA in 2011, and worked there actively until I began my PhD training in 2017. During this time, I continuously grappled with the paradox that the asylum regime was often represented as a self-existing entity, although this entity in fact comprised thousands of individuals working within it, with thousands of different opinions, motivations, and working styles. This realization often triggered philosophical questions of responsibility in terms of my own role within the system, as I would often hear loved ones state their polarizing opinions such as: “it really puts me at rest knowing that there’s a ‘good’ person working within the system” or “hey, I was thinking about your job the other day...have you ever read *Eichmann in Jerusalem*?” I often felt like an insider and an outsider at the same time. When visiting the new SMA headquarters for some of my interviews during the data collection phase of this thesis, the binary of insider/outsider was furthermore disrupted. In corridors where I previously would have swiped my access card and passed through without a suspicious glance, I was now standing behind glass windows, showing my identification card to security guards, in an attempt to score a visitor’s card. I could never figure out the logic behind it, but some days I was asked by the security guards to wait in the entrance hallway, until my interviewee would physically come and retrieve me from the cold, swiping their access cards twice to allow us both through the rotating doors. On other days, however, I was allowed to wait behind the golden gate doors, in a temporary waiting room with free coffee, as I, once again, eagerly waited for my interviewee to claim me in the human “lost and found,” saving me from the gaze of the security guards.

However, as I would sit and wait and reflect on the peculiarity of feeling uncomfortably in/out of place, my thought process was always disrupted by familiar voices and friendly faces. Old colleagues would interrupt their purposeful gait to give me a hug once they had caught sight of me, and ask me how my thesis was going. Those with arms overflowing with case files and faces full of stress would often say something in line with “count yourself lucky that you got out of here when you did,” and those calmly entering to begin their workday would say something in line with “we should get lunch or go for a coffee someday soon.” The spaces that I was to critically engage with, question, and problematize from the perspective of a researcher rather than an employee were the same spaces that I felt a previous, albeit complicated, familiarity with. That being said, “...drawing inside-outside boundaries is a power move, not a move towards truth.”³⁹¹

I reflected on this when visiting a social services office during my data collection phase, where like at the SMA, security guards lined the first point of access. During this visit, I jotted into my journal:

³⁹¹ Tamas 2009, 56.

The first thing which meets my eye is the non-verbal statement that here you must play the part, here you must accept that there is an order to things and that order is out of your control. I understand this theoretically. I want to problematize this order, theoretically. Yet in practice...I am there as a privileged researcher, as someone whose life has not been twisted by violent bordering practices.³⁹²

Although other spaces within my life enact other hierarchical positions in accordance with other identity categories, I occupy a formidable position of privilege if I am able to access specific spaces (such as these) organized around logics of exclusion, solely for purposes of research and without fear of how these particular and violent bordering practices may or may not affect my lived reality. This point should under no circumstances be taken lightly. Yet because of the public representations of these spaces, the latter can be difficult to access for research purposes. My attempts to formally gain access to the SMA for an extended period, for the purpose of doing ethnographic research, fell through twice. My work experience at the SMA, however, did undeniably help me in accessing interviewees. I felt that employees at the SMA were more at ease speaking to me knowing my so-called professional background, although the level of this ease would at times worry me, as some interviewees would share problematic experiences followed by: “well, *you* know how it is.” Social workers would at times also refer to me as the SMA during interviews.

I attempted to minimize using the bureaucratic lingo intrinsic to these institutions during interviews to demarcate the past insider from the present outsider (as if the two could be distinguished from one another...), but quickly realized how these specific vocabularies had unconsciously become entrenched in my way of communicating within these spaces.³⁹³ As Sophie Tamas warns us, “...being an insider isn’t some sort of ethical insurance policy. It can also make you arrogant and blind you to really important issues. Experience and identity can’t be conflated with critical awareness and understanding.”³⁹⁴ Moments such as these reminded me that there is a blurry line between sharing a common temporal and spatial past with someone and meeting in the present under other circumstances. Regardless of whether I personally agreed with them or not, I felt an enormous responsibility associated with the fact that people would give me time in their day to share their reflections, emotions, and experiences with me, handing them over in a fragile box while knowing that my job as a researcher was to amplify, dismantle, and critically examine everything I pulled out of that box. The following sections outline how I ethically and practically went about that process, to the best of my ability.

³⁹² By this I mean bordering practices of inclusion/exclusion in terms of nationality.

³⁹³ This includes, e.g., using the abbreviation BUV (in Swedish this is the abbreviation for *barn utan vårdnadshavare*) when speaking about unaccompanied minors, or referring to a case rather than an asylum-seeker.

³⁹⁴ Tamas 2009, 55.

4.3 Discovery of material: from official documents to interviews

I began this research journey by consulting the official bureaucratic documents I could find surrounding missing asylum-seekers in Sweden, my aim being to get an overarching view of which discourses were sent out into the world through widespread publication, and after, what I can only assume to be, careful negotiation. Apart from the SMA's official employee handbook outlining bureaucratic routines for managing the case files of absconding asylum-seekers, most of the documents I came across were produced by the Stockholm County Administrative Board in cooperation with governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations,³⁹⁵ and often solely in relation to missing unaccompanied minors. The Stockholm County Administrative Board appeared to be the largest producer of these documents as a result of a designated government assignment given in January 2016 (later extended in 2018), which called upon County Administrative Boards to "...in cooperation with other relevant authorities and actors, conduct a national mapping of missing unaccompanied children and propose measures to the government to prevent their disappearances."³⁹⁶ The Stockholm County Administrative Board established a network of both institutions and organizations that were regularly in contact with unaccompanied minors and developed a project plan (as laid out in these publications) in which their goal was to increase cooperation with the network, increase efficiency, and work proactively to decrease disappearances.³⁹⁷

I am hesitantly impressed by the network's attempt to take on, in my view, an almost impossible task of categorizing abstract conceptualizations and diverse lived realities into cooperation plans, manageable routines, and checklists. This inevitably reduces the complexity and the messiness of the social world into, as some interviewees would refer to it, "a roadmap," alleviating some of the pressures of everyday decision-making through the use of overarching bureaucratic guidelines. Yet I have always been a fan of embracing the chaos and digging into disorder, or to put it into more academic terms, "[a]ttuning our methodological approach to mess..."³⁹⁸ As Allison Howell states, "[w]hile policy documents are a useful place to begin, they can only tell us about the aspirations of their authors. In order to get at the *messy actualities* of governing, it becomes important to go beyond policy."³⁹⁹ Although these documents were not policy documents as such, I did recognize from my

³⁹⁵ See, e.g.: Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b, and 2017c.

³⁹⁶ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm (no date a.).

³⁹⁷ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm (no date b.).

³⁹⁸ Squire 2013, 37.

³⁹⁹ Howell 2013, 130.

own experience of working at the SMA that everyday interactions with notions of missingness were more intricate and multilayered than represented in these documents, thus leading me to the decision to collect my material through interviews.

I conducted interviews with forty individuals.⁴⁰⁰ Of these forty individuals, seventeen worked within the SMA, fourteen within the social services, and three within the police.⁴⁰¹ One individual was difficult to categorize as they mainly drew on their experiences of having previously worked at both the SMA and social services. Another individual contributed with their experience of working within the network created by the Stockholm County Administrative Board and therefore with the SMA, social services, and the police; and another worked together with social services to locate unaccompanied minors who had gone missing. The remaining three interviewees were later excluded from this thesis.⁴⁰² The positions of those who were interviewed at both the SMA and social services included a wide range of job titles, from case-workers/social workers to heads of departments.⁴⁰³ At the SMA, many of those interviewed shared a wide range of experiences as a result of having worked at different units related to the asylum-seeking process *within* the SMA. Interviews normally ranged from forty-five minutes to one and a half hours in duration and were conducted in all imaginable locations, ranging from formal conference rooms, to bustling cosmopolitan cafés, and virtual Skype meetings, once the Corona pandemic reared its ugly head. If the interviewees were acquaintances from before, the interviews were sometimes conducted over coffee at my kitchen table at home, or sitting cross-legged on their living room couches in their homes. I encouraged those being interviewed to choose whichever location they preferred, hoping to accommodate, to the best of my ability, their schedules and comfort levels.

⁴⁰⁰ This resulted in a total of thirty-six interviews, as two interviews included three people who were interviewed at the same time as part of a group discussion. This format was requested by those specific interviewees. All interviews were conducted between September 2018 to September 2020. For a list of interviewees, see: Appendix III.

⁴⁰¹ One interview with an employee within the police force was, however, “off the record.”

⁴⁰² Two of these interviewees were employed at NGOs working with unaccompanied minors and one was employed at an accommodation center for unaccompanied minors. They were interviewed because many interviewees had mentioned the role of both NGOs and accommodation centers in relation to missing unaccompanied minors. It was thus interesting to hear their perspectives. I was hoping to see whether these organizations and facilities could somehow initially be brought into this thesis, but decided to limit the scope to state employees within the Swedish asylum regime.

⁴⁰³ For a list of the positions of those who were interviewed, see: Appendix III. Not all positions or units of employment are listed in this appendix, as some interviewees requested that I exclude this information, in order to further protect their anonymity.

All but three interviews were audio-recorded,⁴⁰⁴ and all interviewees were offered anonymity.⁴⁰⁵ Although it was a time-consuming endeavor indeed, I made the active choice to transcribe the interviews myself, hoping that this would offer an even greater reassurance of anonymity for those being interviewed. Despite the painstakingly brutal task of listening to my own harrowing voice eagerly trying to seek out human connections for hours on end, I also made this choice because I wanted to recognize my own mannerisms within the interviewing process as early on as possible, in order to minimize occasions when I could perhaps affect what someone was sharing with me by, for example, not waiting out the silences.⁴⁰⁶ By transcribing early on, I have learned that silences do not always need to be filled with small talk or further questions, an idea that has disrupted everything the American school system taught me as a child about pleasant and polite social behavior. It should also be noted that all interviews were carried out in Swedish, and transcribed accordingly. I have translated the chosen excerpts into English and have, due to matters of transparency, included the terms I found difficult to translate in an appendix.⁴⁰⁷

4.3.1 Access to interviewees

I attempted to access interviewees through both formal and informal routes. Every formal attempt with the SMA and the police entailed e-mailing far up on the hierarchy ladder, enduring a lengthy silence, and then being appointed a representative to be interviewed. Many of my interviewees at the social services were obtained by contacting heads of departments, resulting in an even mixture of silences and positive responses, with many putting me in touch with the social workers within their department as well. Most of the interviewees, however, were accessed through using a snowball method, beginning with my own contacts at the SMA, and contacts of friends and acquaintances within the social services. I was often put in touch with others through these interviews. Although my personal contacts from my years of working within the

⁴⁰⁴ One of these interviews was not audio-recorded in an attempt to test the method of note-taking rather than recording and then transcribing. The other two interviews were “off the record,” as requested by the interviewees. Consequently, they are not quoted or included in my thesis as such, but the information provided in them was instead useful for content-checking other interviews, as well as for networking purposes. It should also be noted that I have followed Stockholm University’s GDPR guidelines to the best of my abilities.

⁴⁰⁵ In my empirical chapters (Chapters 5 to 7), interviewees are referred to using gender neutral pronouns (as requested by some interviewees), the aim being to provide as much anonymity as possible. A handful of interviewees asked to approve their quotes ahead of time, despite anonymity. For those whom I was able to reach, the quotes sent to them were approved. For those whom I was unable to reach, their direct quotes were not included in the thesis.

⁴⁰⁶ If I believed this was indeed the case, those passages were not included in the thesis.

⁴⁰⁷ See: Appendix I.

SMA provided me a golden path in, albeit through the backdoor, I spent many sleepless nights in the beginning of my interviewing process, attempting to figure out the political and ethical consequences of interviewing people whom I knew, not only for the sake of the thesis, but also for the sake of these relationships. I was worried that perhaps only one specific view on migration and missingness would be represented and I therefore attempted to counteract this by reaching out, for the majority of my interviews, to those whose political affiliations had not been shared with me during small talk in front of the lunchroom microwaves. It should be noted that employees within the police were nearly impossible to access, which constitutes a finding per se, regarding issues of transparency, issues of resources, or both. Although my contact details were circulated formally and informally, I obtained two “on the record” interviews and one “off the record” interview. These interviews are nevertheless of value to this thesis, as I am interested in interviewees and their role within the asylum regime. Individual employees at the police play a role within that regime, as do employees at the SMA and social services.

4.3.2 Interviewing process

I chose a semi-formal interviewing process, hoping to enable a conversation that was as easygoing as possible and that would provide a space not only to investigate the everyday practices within the Swedish asylum regime, but also to examine the reflections and emotions surrounding missingness and working within this regime. The questions I posed differed depending on what institution the interviewee was employed at and could also differ depending on what unit the interviewee was employed at within their institution. It should be noted, however, that these differences were only slight. I began all interviews by paradoxically and purposefully adopting the interview style that the SMA uses when interviewing asylum-seekers, that is, by asking an open-ended question, later returning to the core questions. Interviewees were asked to begin by describing, in any way shape or form, their experiences with missing or absconding asylum-seekers. Similar to Heather L. Johnson’s technique of open-ended interviews guided by core questions, “[i]n giving at least partial control of the interview to participants, a semi-structured, open interview enabled my participants to contextualize and represent him/herself as much as possible.”⁴⁰⁸ Although Johnson’s technique is used for amplifying “...subjugated knowledges and the voices of the marginalized,”⁴⁰⁹ I do believe that a similar approach is beneficial when trying to penetrate beneath official state narratives, and access the reflections of those working within the state, both as state employees, but also as subjects above and beyond their work titles.

⁴⁰⁸ Johnson 2013a, 68.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

The open-ended question, which asked interviewees to reflect on their experiences of missingness, was tackled in a variety of ways. Some interviewees reflected on individual cases for an endless amount of time, while others referenced official guidelines, unconsciously tapping their hands on the Stockholm County Administrative Board's official documents, which they had printed out and brought to the interview. Others found this interviewing style rather difficult and asked to be provided with more guidance on answering the question. Core questions in every interview entailed asking about routines at the unit in relation to pre-/potential/post-disappearances, what terms are used at the unit, reflections on the terms missing and absconding, and questions of responsibility in relation to preventing disappearances and/or finding missing asylum-seekers again. I would often stray from the core questions, but always return to them, my goal being to ask natural follow-up questions about something the interviewee may have said. Interviewees were asked to discuss their own interpretations of terms known to have many different meanings, such as *control*, *surveillance*, and *power*, if they had used them in an answer.

In line with Johnson's interview design, a flexible approach, "...required me to be open both to changing my focus and the questions I asked according to what information I received. I constantly assessed and reassessed my approach. I did not delete or remove questions, but only added them as needed. This maintained a baseline of consistency across interviews, while also enabling a learning process."⁴¹⁰ It should also be noted that direct quotes from the interviews have purposefully been used in the thesis and kept, at times, in their original lengthy format, with a view "[t]o not be biased against (or make impossible) the capturing of a multiplicity of knowledge..."⁴¹¹ Hence, by incorporating quotes in their original lengthy format, I hope to provide the reader with transparency as to my interpretations of the interview material. I have also attempted to include in my transcriptions and thereafter quotes, instances in which interviewees have laughed when providing an answer, have paused in silence, hesitated with their words, used their fingers to signal quotation marks around words, or where we may have cut each other off, or been interrupted by an external disturbance. By attempting to transcribe non-verbal forms of communication as well, I hope to not only capture the atmosphere in the room, but also acknowledge the relevance of all forms of communication, whether articulated through words or gestures.

4.3.3 The politics of language

The fine balancing act of having the ethical responsibility to be transparent about one's initial research project with interviewees, while being as receptive

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Leander 2016, 470.

and attentive as possible to new potentialities, surprises, and disturbances, which may introduce new directions during the interviews, can indeed be difficult to navigate. As Nicole Nguyen describes, albeit in relation to covert research methods, “[w]hat ethical responsibility did James have to disclose the research agenda? Did his intentions to reveal hidden abuses of power alter this responsibility?”⁴¹² Added into the mix of ethics and transparency, there is also the desire to avoid describing one’s project in terms that will guide the interviewee to purposefully use specific words or descriptions that may do nothing but reaffirm the theoretical concepts floating around in the interviewer’s head. There is indeed a politics to the framing of one’s research project, and whether or not to confess one’s intellectual politics and/or critical positionality.⁴¹³ Hence, in my e-mails reaching out to interviewees, I chose to describe my project as focusing on the practices of state employees at state institutions with regard to asylum-seekers who disappear/abscond during the asylum-seeking process. The e-mail explained that although this topic is something that has, at times, gained media attention, current research has yet to explore how employees deal with missingness both administratively and personally.

At times, I would already disclose in the e-mail that I had previously worked for the SMA. If this information was not provided when reaching out, I made a point of divulging it to all interviewees, stressing that this project was being conducted independent of that employment, which had only sparked some of my ideas for the thesis that were based on previous experiences. I found this to be important information to disclose, as I noticed that some interviewees outside the SMA had strong critical opinions against the SMA. I unsurprisingly wanted to avoid any interviewees feeling as if I had a double agenda, which could have occurred had this not been revealed. It should be noted that, in the consent forms provided to the interviewees, the project was described in a similar fashion to the e-mails, but included its original working title: “The Biopolitics of (Dis)appearing Asylum-Seekers.” If I remember correctly, only one interviewee asked what I meant by the term *biopolitics* while signing the consent form. I was always open to discussing my alignment with the critical IR literature, on the occasions this was brought up by the interviewees.

In addition to the terms used in the project description, it should also be noted that I have endlessly reflected on which terms to use in the interview questions and in the thesis in general, an especially important point when one’s thesis is concerned with the particularities of knowledge production and its embeddedness with power. The “questions we ask and the language we use matter,”⁴¹⁴ because “[l]anguage is not simply ‘transparent,’ reflecting a social

⁴¹² Nguyen 2016, 54-55.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 57 & 59.

⁴¹⁴ Wibben 2016, 2.

reality that is objectively out there.”⁴¹⁵ I have yet to settle on terms that I feel one hundred percent comfortable with. Terms such as refugees and asylum-seekers are highly political, as they create distinct and dominant categories, later becoming empty signifiers that are filled with content according to specific political agendas. The term asylum-seeker indicates an entrapped state of being (one *is* an asylum-seeker) rather than an act or event (one *seeks* asylum), as one is referred to using this term beyond the initial instance of registering an application for asylum. By using broad terms such as “asylum-seeker” to represent all individuals in various stages of the asylum-seeking process, abstract lived realities are defaced into a “manageable” category, as they “...appear conquered, disciplined and organised into spatially constrained imaginaries.”⁴¹⁶ This is indeed similar to the term refugee, as “...refugees come into being by becoming visible as subjects to be governed,” because this “...visibility constitutes a form of knowledge production that enables management and control...”⁴¹⁷ How do I justify using a term in my thesis that I believe simplifies complex lived realities and transforms them into an objectified and “manageable” identity category, making life easier not just for the overall border regime, but also as regards to communicating with my interviewees?

In this sense, I have chosen to align with Judith Butler. In having to use the debatable category “women” in her research on gender and performativity, Butler explains that deconstruction of the category of women invites it to be opened up: “[s]urely, it must be possible both to use the term, to use it tactically even as one is, as it were, used and positioned by it, and also to subject the term to critique which interrogates the exclusionary operations and differential power-relations that construct and delimit feminist invocations of ‘women’.”⁴¹⁸ She also implies, “[a]lthough the political discourses that mobilize identity categories tend to cultivate identifications in the service of a political goal, it may be that the persistence of *disidentification* is equally crucial to the rearticulation of democratic contestation.”⁴¹⁹ Terms such as “asylum-seeker” can thereby tactically be used throughout the process of their continuous dismantling. Abstract terms such as missing and absconding, were also used in interview questions and serve as the basis for this thesis. They are analyzed in depth in Chapter 5. The findings examined in the empirical chapters strive to contribute to a persistent interrogation of these terms, despite the need for their presence in framing interview questions. As the discourses produced in relation to these terms serve as the basis for this thesis, the following sections will outline the method best utilized to examine them.

⁴¹⁵ Richardson 1990, 12.

⁴¹⁶ Puumala 2017, 35

⁴¹⁷ Ansems de Vries 2016, 883.

⁴¹⁸ Butler 1993, 5.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xiii.

4.4 Method(ology): a note on ontology and epistemology

Post-positivist scholars have often advocated for the necessity of “[u]nlearning dominant frames of reference and traditional research practices...”⁴²⁰ and critiqued “...the *method* of separating the world ‘out there’ from the theories ‘in here’ and on the *methodology* of putting these parts together by evacuating all traces of plot, character and dialogue from theory.”⁴²¹ The ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this thesis find their home within a critical sphere, taking the “inconveniences and irregularities of mess seriously.”⁴²² Adopting a critical inquiry can entail viewing the world through a lens that comprehends social and political life as messy, that has the capacity to locate agency everywhere (in humans and non-humans), that views causality as “emergent, rather than efficient,” while viewing research, writing, and public engagement as “...inherently political.”⁴²³ This thesis adopts a poststructuralist stance, as poststructuralism is engaged with as “...both a *political theory* that seeks to unveil how some ontological claims are gained credibility, while others are denounced as illegitimate, and a *methodology* that structures the analysis of text in all possible ways.”⁴²⁴

This thesis embraces an interpretivist method, prioritizing engagement over objectivity.⁴²⁵ It acknowledges the political and performative nature of methods. Methods are acts and devices in the sense that they do not simply reflect a reality, but disrupt and interfere with the world in which they engage. A conceptualization of methods as such thereby disrupts the traditional treatment of methods as a neutral tool, linking together abstract theories with empirical cases.⁴²⁶ Methods are instead “...performative practices experimentally connecting and assembling fragments of ontology, epistemology, theories, techniques and data through which substantive effects are obtained.”⁴²⁷ By using a Foucauldian toolbox to examine discourses produced by employees working within the asylum regime, the production of knowledge and its claim to an objective truth, is itself questioned.

4.4.1 Theoretical underpinnings of discourse

Before approaching the examination of discourses as found in the work of Foucault, this section will outline the theoretical underpinnings of discourse

⁴²⁰ Wibben 2016, 11.

⁴²¹ Vraști 2010, 85.

⁴²² Squire 2013, 37.

⁴²³ Salter 2013a, 2.

⁴²⁴ Nabers 2015, 60.

⁴²⁵ Salter 2013b, 15.

⁴²⁶ Aradau and Huysmans 2014, 603 & 609.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 598.

as ontologically related to poststructuralist thought. Dirk Nabers argues that one must be clear, for the purposes of analysis, in differentiating between discourse *theory* and discourse *analysis*. He states, “[w]hereas the former is interested in the ontological horizon against which societies, with their domain practices and processes of subjectification, are formed, the latter- very much in Foucault’s tradition- draws attention to techniques of problematization and ways of questioning normative orders.”⁴²⁸ According to Jason Glynos and David Howarth, a poststructuralist discourse theory often aims, through retroductive forms, for a critical explanation, achieved through modes of articulation. Whereas positivism ontologically presupposes regularities between observable phenomena, poststructuralist discourse theory believes in the radical contingency of objectivity.⁴²⁹ Discourse analysts identifying with a poststructuralist tradition of thought often display an interest in “...the reproduction and transformation of hegemonic orders and practices,” asking why “...certain political projects or social practices remain or become hegemonic.”⁴³⁰

Yet despite what the *aim* of examining existing discourses *is* according to certain poststructuralists, it is undoubtedly worth asking: why should we even examine discourses to begin with? Jennifer Milliken puts forth three analytically distinguishable bundles of theoretical claims that, organize discourse studies. First, discourses are “...structures of signification which construct social realities.”⁴³¹ They are also (re)productive of things defined by the discourse, and “...beyond giving a language of speaking about (analyzing, classifying) phenomena, discourses make intelligible some ways of being in, and acting towards, the world, and of operationalizing a particular ‘regime of truth’ while excluding other possible modes of identity and action.”⁴³² They define and enable, but also silence and exclude.⁴³³ Finally, Milliken notes that although we may study dominating or hegemonic discourses and their role in structuring meaning, discourses are changeable and historically contingent. We must also study “...alternative discourses excluded or silenced by a hegemonic discourse...explaining how these alternative discourses worked or work, perhaps in resistance to the dominant knowledge/power.”⁴³⁴

The poststructuralist linguistic turn in the 20th century, in which questions of ontology shifted to questions of epistemology, is an important component in understanding this narrative of examining discourses in IR. The poststructuralist linguistic turn accentuated that there is nothing external to language, as “...language is not a tool to express ideas about reality; rather, the speaking

⁴²⁸ Nabers 2015, 129.

⁴²⁹ Glynos and Howarth 2007, 212.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴³¹ Milliken 1999, 229.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 230.

subject is always already embedded in a preexisting language structure. Naming produces things rather than attaching labels to ‘objects’ already there.”⁴³⁵ Thus, language is not a neutral medium; it is an active composer in creating the world. It is “...a set of signs, which are part of a system for generating subjects, objects, and worlds,” and its productive nature “...does not depend on nor necessarily coincide with motivations, perceptions, intentions, or understandings of social actors.”⁴³⁶ Many theorists examining discourses would argue, however, that discourses are (re)produced through both linguistic and non-linguistic practices.⁴³⁷

Examining how discourses *produce* this world⁴³⁸ leads many IR critical theorists to adopt a Foucauldian stance on discourse, in which discourses are neither neutral nor external to “pre-existing” things/thoughts.⁴³⁹ Rather than examining discourse as a system of its language, Foucault is instead interested in its conditions of existence. He states:

I do not question discourses about their silently intended meanings, but about the fact and the conditions of their manifest appearance; not about the contents which they may conceal, but about the transformations which they have effected; not about the sense preserved within them like a perpetual origin, but about the field where they coexist, reside and disappear. It is a question of an analysis of the discourses in the dimension of their exteriority.⁴⁴⁰

According to Foucault, this means that one should not treat discourse as a theme or commentary, but should relate the discourse to the practical field in which it is deployed, rather than to the thought, mind or subject which engendered it.⁴⁴¹ It is important to note here that academics such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have vocalized their discontent with Foucault’s distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices. In rejecting this distinction, they claim that their analysis:

...affirms a) that every object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence; and b) that any distinction between what are usually called the linguistic and behavioural aspects of a social practice, is either an incorrect distinction or ought to find its place as a differentiation within the social production of meaning, which is structured under the form of discursive totalities.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁵ Edkins 1999, 22.

⁴³⁶ Doty 1993, 302.

⁴³⁷ See, e.g.: Laffey and Weldes 2004, 28.

⁴³⁸ Milliken 1999, 236.

⁴³⁹ Edkins 1999, 45.

⁴⁴⁰ Foucault 1991b, 59-60.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 60-61.

⁴⁴² Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 93.

Discourses produce the world in that they are "...practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak."⁴⁴³ They are also often examined through their production of subjects and the positioning of subjects in relation to one other,⁴⁴⁴ as even the discoursing subjects have a function in the discursive field. As Foucault states in a lecture on politics and the study of discourse, "[w]hat is important for me is to show that there are not on the one hand inert discourses, which are already more than half dead, and on the other hand, an all-powerful subject which manipulates them, overturns them, renews them; but that discoursing subjects form a part of the discursive field- they have their place within it...and their function..."⁴⁴⁵ A Foucauldian understanding of discourse also examines the embeddedness of both power and knowledge. Not only is "...the subject and the knowledge of the subject, together with institutional expression of that knowledge...produced *together*," but discourses also produce an organizing "legitimation of power."⁴⁴⁶ Overall, scholars examining discourses are often found gravitating around "...the relationship between social structure and subjectivity, time, power and truth, often summarized under the label 'discourse'."⁴⁴⁷

4.4.2 Examining discourses according to Foucault

Analyzing discourses in the spirit of Foucault not only stipulates the need to grasp these theoretical underpinnings, but also introduces the researcher to different periods of Foucault's work. Foucault's writings on discourse progress from examining excluded silences, to exploring "...the material effects of discursive formations."⁴⁴⁸ It is often claimed that Foucault had two main discourse periods in his life: the archaeology phase and the genealogy phase. The archaeology phase emphasizes the study of discursive systems in themselves, while the genealogy phase examines social practices as a whole and power's role in the production of subjects.⁴⁴⁹ Foucault, however, makes the following distinctions in the study of discourse: the critical section and the genealogical section. On the one hand, the mode of the critical section entails "...trying to grasp the forms of exclusion, of limitation, of appropriation...showing how they are formed, in response to what needs, how they have been modified and displaced, what constraint they have effectively exerted, to what extent they have been evaded." In contrast, the genealogical section aims to delve into the following: "...how did series of discourses come to be

⁴⁴³ Foucault 2002, 54.

⁴⁴⁴ Doty 1993, 303

⁴⁴⁵ Foucault 1991b, 58.

⁴⁴⁶ Edkins 1999, 50 & 59.

⁴⁴⁷ Nabers 2015, 61.

⁴⁴⁸ Shapiro 2017, 119.

⁴⁴⁹ Edkins 1999, 42.

formed, across the grain of, in spite of, or with the aid of these systems of constraints; what was the specific norm of each one, and what were the conditions of appearance, growth, variation.”⁴⁵⁰

Foucault’s genealogy approach to studying discourse has indeed received its fair share of critical IR popularity, as it is devoid of strict guidelines and is rather accessible as a toolkit. It is a method that serves as a form of critique in itself, as it has the potential to disrupt our pre-conceived logics,⁴⁵¹ as a discourse analysis based on a genealogical approach, “...seeks *ruptures*, silences, breaks, marginalized voices or subjugated knowledges.”⁴⁵² When approaching discourses via Foucault, it is important to note that his work is, according to him, intended to analytically serve as a tool-box,⁴⁵³ not as the mere solution to any given situation.⁴⁵⁴ As Jacob Torfing states, “...discourse theory has thrown the methodological baby out with the epistemological bath water. This reveals the huge size of the methodological gap to be filled...Discourse theory should not aim to develop a general set of methodological rules that can and should be used in all kinds of discourse analysis. The aspiration for a rigid decontextualized method is absurd...”⁴⁵⁵

4.5 Method: Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis

The notion that adopting a *rigid* method in this thesis constitutes an impossible task is humbly accepted, as discourse is instead analyzed in relation to a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, with its ontological underpinnings guiding this process and serving as tools for an interpretivist method. Discourses are examined within a specific site, that is to say, within different institutions in Sweden that serve as preeminent actors within a broader, more diffused site: the asylum regime, and are thereby related to the practical field in which they are deployed.⁴⁵⁶ As covered in Chapter 3, social practices in this site often entail the registration and “management” of asylum-seekers, instilling the entrenched conceptualization that one is forever caught in the gaze of the state. Life is registered and then entrapped in a sphere of administration. Yet by

⁴⁵⁰ Foucault 1981, 70.

⁴⁵¹ Salter 2013a, 6.

⁴⁵² Mutlu and Salter 2013, 114.

⁴⁵³ Shapiro 2017, 115.

⁴⁵⁴ Regarding other Foucauldian concepts, Walters explains, “[w]hile analytics like biopolitics, discipline and neoliberalism offer all manner of insights, we need to avoid the trap which sees Foucault’s toolbox as something ready-made for any given situation.” See: Walters 2011, 157-158.

⁴⁵⁵ Torfing 2005, 27.

⁴⁵⁶ Foucault 1991b, 60-61.

examining the discourses produced in everyday bureaucratic corridors surrounding the notion of missingness, a notion that challenges the logics of this bureaucracy organized not only around a politics of presence and absence, but also around a politics of inclusion and exclusion, a discourse analysis, as previously mentioned, "...draws attention to techniques of problematization and ways of questioning normative orders."⁴⁵⁷

If discourses produce this world, then their role in the production of knowledge within this institutional milieu are of importance not only in relation to the broader asylum regime, but also in relation to notions of power. The role of the discoursing subjects (read: employees at these institutions) forms part of the discursive field,⁴⁵⁸ as they simultaneously play a role in the production of the missing subject and the governance of missingness. By adopting a Foucauldian discourse analysis, we must examine how power is embedded in the discursive practice of knowledge production, and how it thereby plays an active role in "...operationalizing a particular 'regime of truth...'"⁴⁵⁹ This "regime of truth" can affect the practical and lived realities of those seeking asylum.

So how is my actual interview material examined bearing this in mind? As Can E. Mutlu and Mark B. Salter claim, "[g]ood discourse analysis will...identify what the meaning is of the data collected through formal content analysis that measures: the appearance or dominance of a particular phrase or set of terms; the persistence of a metaphorical trope such as inside/outside, self/other, national security/international anarchy; or the development of a linguistic or visual practice."⁴⁶⁰ Three sets of "terms" or "discursive themes" appeared when examining the interview material for this thesis: *(in)visibilities*, *control*, and *care*. Their emergence grew out of a research process that was both inductive and flexible. When I began the interviewing process for this thesis, I initially approached my research from a perspective that predominantly focused on biopolitics. Previous literature on the practices of asylum regimes and the management of populations overwhelmingly consisted of Foucauldian interpretations of biopower. Although I was open to the idea that the notion of missingness could have the potential to *disrupt* biopolitical governing logics, I expected that discourses of control could be found at this specific site. As "...all observation is both embedded and embodied,"⁴⁶¹ my previous work experience from this site itself, combined with previous literature, also pointed me in the initial direction of control. However, although this discursive theme was at the back of my mind from the beginning

⁴⁵⁷ Nabers 2015, 129.

⁴⁵⁸ Foucault 1991b, 58.

⁴⁵⁹ Milliken 1999, 229.

⁴⁶⁰ Mutlu and Salter 2013, 116.

⁴⁶¹ Leander 2016, 464.

of this study, I was open to whatever would emerge from the field, and was, thereby, careful not to steer my interviewees into conversations about control.

Instead, I was prepared for it to emerge naturally through conversations. *And so it did.* Some interviewees mentioned the actual term control in the interviews, and when this happened, I would always ask them to elaborate on what they meant by using this term. Regardless of whether the term itself was or was not directly used by interviewees, discourses of control emerged repeatedly in the material. Control was described by interviewees through terminologies and practices typically associated with control in the CSS/CMS literature: such as having an “overview,” surveillance, management, observing, and quantifying. Similarly to what Nguyen did in her research on homeland security, by analyzing specific discourses, I “...sought to trace the discourses and vocabularies that circulated...” in relation to missing asylum-seekers, examining the ways in which these discourses both “...enabled and limited...” how employees related to the notion of missingness, as well as how they “...negotiated these discourses.”⁴⁶²

What gradually became clear throughout the interview process, and when revisiting the interview material, was the repetition of certain discourses in constructing missingness, ranging from the usage of specific vocabulary to the articulation of practices and how the employee related to these practices. By examining these discourses, which were both repeated and reiterated by employees, I was better able to “theorize the power of language in relation to specific political processes.”⁴⁶³ When examining the material that I had collected thus far during the initial part of my interviewing process, the terminologies directly used and the practices described by interviewees in relation to control would often coincide with Foucault’s description of biopower, as described in Chapter 2. Discursive practices of control were described as both targeting and supervising the population.⁴⁶⁴ Yet, discursive practices of control were also described as imposing “...constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions.”⁴⁶⁵ Hence, the need to introduce disciplinary power to this thesis also emerged. Because power is embedded in the discursive practice of knowledge production, it was important to consistently be attentive to what different technologies of power were embedded within and operating through each discursive theme.

⁴⁶² In her ethnographic research on a Homeland Security program at a U.S. school, Nguyen states, “[s]ince discourses both ‘constrain how we might participate in social life because they furnish subject positions’ and ‘construct objects’ I sought to trace the discourses and vocabularies that circulated within the Milton community, how they enabled and limited how students talked and thought about their school and about national security, and how people negotiated these discourses.” See: Nguyen 2016, 54.

⁴⁶³ Huysmans quoted in Mutlu and Salter 2013, 118.

⁴⁶⁴ Foucault 1998, 139-140.

⁴⁶⁵ Foucault 1991a, 10-11.

However, as I continued interviewing state employees, and as my material continued to expand, a new discursive theme began to emerge, taking me by surprise: care. Once again, some interviewees would mention the actual term care during interviews, but otherwise care would be described by interviewees through terminologies such as: empathy, sympathy, concern for wellbeing, guidance, and support. The terminologies directly used, and the practices described by interviewees in relation to care, often coincided with Foucault's description of pastoral power, as described in Chapter 2. Discursive practices of care were described as focusing on the individual and the population, attending to notions of wellbeing,⁴⁶⁶ through guiding, shaping, leading and conducting.⁴⁶⁷ Hence, two discursive themes emerged through their repetitiveness: control and care. A third discursive theme also emerged: (in)visibilities. (In)visibilities emerged as an overarching discursive theme in the discussion of missingness, as state employees would discuss notions of presence and absence, and making someone/something visible, especially in relation to the production of the missing subject, and regardless of whether they were speaking about control and/or care. I have thereby been open to all three discursive themes as they have emerged throughout the research process when interviewing, listening, and reading. However, as will be shown in the empirical chapters: control and care were more predominant than (in)visibilities, and therefore occupy a larger space in this thesis.

4.6 Concluding remarks on method(ology)

In conclusion, it should also be noted that as "...the challenge is not seeing, but rather allowing what you see to be how it is, rather than what you were expecting or hoping to see," the material has also been examined for "stick phrases- things that just jumped out at me for whatever reason,"⁴⁶⁸ despite their lack of predominance or repetitiveness. For example, when clear instances of control were described by interviewees, I was also attentive to the descriptions of lack of control. I did this to ensure that the material was not only analyzed through repetitive discourses, but a multitude of discourses, so that this thesis would also be open to the idea of "...ruptures, silences, breaks, marginalized voices or subjugated knowledges."⁴⁶⁹ This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the relationship between governance and missingness, as the reflections, experiences, and emotions of state employees sometimes result in discordant discourses, despite organizing logics calling for a

⁴⁶⁶ Martin and Waring 2018, 1293.

⁴⁶⁷ Walters 2012, 21.

⁴⁶⁸ Tamas 2009, 88 & 86.

⁴⁶⁹ Mutlu and Salter 2013, 114.

unified approach to the “management” of migration. Examining discourses within this site and in this way has allowed me to adopt a research attitude of wondering, which “...requires courage to relate to the unexpected, resourcefulness to face the unrelated, and restlessness to persist with the adventure of opening up new paths of knowledge.”⁴⁷⁰ That being said, the following empirical chapter examines how missing asylum-seekers are produced in relation to (in)visibilities. This thesis will then continue to examine how missingness is governed through different technologies of power that are embedded within and operate through discourses of control and discourses of care.

⁴⁷⁰ Lobo-Guerrero 2013, 25.

5. The Production of the (In)visible Missing Subject

As this thesis aims to examine the governance of missingness within the asylum regime in Sweden, this chapter begins by examining how the *missing subject* is produced. This chapter will investigate how the missing subject is produced through specific terminologies that are created and dispersed by the system itself, through formal documents and through informal everyday workplace discourses. The findings in this chapter play an essential role in answering the research question: how is missingness governed within the Swedish asylum regime? It also contributes to answering the overall question: what does this tell us about different technologies of power? Aligned with a Foucauldian spirit,⁴⁷¹ this chapter shows that power not only plays a role in the production of the missing subject, but also appears to attempt to keep, through biopolitical logics, the missing subject *visible* within the system, despite the *invisibility* of the physical subject.

The beginning of this chapter sets the scene and provides the context for where the missing subject is produced and where missingness occurs. Section 5.1 provides a background of the asylum-seeking system in Sweden, while Section 5.2 continues by providing a background of the phenomenon of missingness in Sweden, outlining how many have disappeared from a system that, at first glance, appears to be both well-organized and highly functioning, and the reasons behind these disappearances. Accordingly, Section 5.3 examines the first formal step in how the missing subject is produced, as a network created by the Stockholm County Administrative Board has attempted to establish specific terminologies (*absconding* and *missing*) to be applied by institutions such as the SMA and social services when an unaccompanied minor goes missing. These have been established in an attempt to understand missingness and to establish unanimous routines in managing it.

Despite the network's attempt to differentiate between these two terminologies, Section 5.4 investigates how the everyday discourses surrounding these terminologies, as mainly produced in interviews with employees at the SMA and social services, attach different meanings to the terminologies themselves. The creation of the missing subject per se (what this means and when one becomes this subject) thereby becomes a site of struggle, as the ambiguity and

⁴⁷¹ Edkins 1999, 52-54.

uncertainty of missingness begins to surface.⁴⁷² Nevertheless, the missing subject is made visible through being both categorized and labelled, formally and informally. This chapter continues by expanding on the bureaucratization of the term *absconding* in Section 5.5, in particular by the SMA, as the missing subject is *kept* visible and registered as absconding within the system, despite actually being physically missing. This bureaucratization directs the governance of a case rather than the governance of a physical body, as the missing subject is made manageable, except for in instances when the physical body reappears and disrupts biopolitical logics. Finally, Section 5.6 investigates how the categorization and labelling of the missing subject is also shaped into “statistical knowledge,” and thereby made visible through the technique of quantifying, as the missing subject is converted into a visible so-called “stick” (i.e., counted toward production goals) for the SMA when their case is closed.

5.1 Background of the Swedish asylum-seeking system

Before examining how missingness is governed within the asylum regime in Sweden, it is worth briefly explaining which state institutions contribute to the overall existence of this regime, and what rules are enforced to enable its functioning. The Swedish asylum-seeking process appears to be well-organized and highly functioning, with many hoops to jump through throughout the process, from beginning to end. The patriarch of the Swedish asylum regime is the SMA, the institution mandated to process asylum claims. According to the SMA’s website, upon entering Sweden’s physical territory, an individual who wants to apply for asylum should claim this right when encountering border police.⁴⁷³ This is the first step in the production of the “asylum-seeking subject,” as will be further examined in Chapter 6. They will subsequently be redirected to the SMA, where the process of registering their claims will proceed. If the asylum-seeker is already in Sweden when they want to assert this right, they should contact the SMA directly.⁴⁷⁴ In the section on the SMA website aimed at those seeking asylum, the following is stated: “[w]hen you apply for asylum you have to describe who you are, why you want to apply for asylum and how you travelled to Sweden.”⁴⁷⁵ “[Y]ou must state who you are” by providing identification documents that “...prove your identity: what your name is, when you were born and what country you are a citizen of.” An initial

⁴⁷² Please note that for reasons of simplicity, the term “missing” is used as an umbrella term in this thesis to describe when someone disappears from the asylum-seeking process, regardless of reason, and is not necessarily aligned with the network’s definition of “missing.”

⁴⁷³ Migrationsverket 2021c.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

identity is subsequently registered with the SMA, although the “validity” of this identity may undergo many trials and tribulations during the asylum-seeking process. The idea that one must “prove their identification” to the SMA occupies a dominant position within the process of seeking asylum and is continuously reinforced.

At an SMA office, the asylum-seeker’s photograph and fingerprints are taken.⁴⁷⁶ One is incorporated into and subjected to the asylum-seeking system, as one is “bureaucratically captured.”⁴⁷⁷ Fingerprints are cross-checked and then referenced to determine what country is indeed responsible for processing the asylum claims, depending on the individual’s past mobilities. According to the website, “. . . whether you have applied for asylum in any other Schengen country and if you have a residence permit or prohibition in any Schengen country,” could determine whether or not the Dublin Regulation is enforced.⁴⁷⁸ The Dublin Regulation is based on the principle that “[y]ou cannot choose what country will examine your application for asylum,”⁴⁷⁹ meaning that the asylum-seeker could be sent back to a previously visited Schengen country for further processing. If Sweden is established as the country that is responsible for investigating the claims to asylum, the asylum-seeker will have to partake in an application interview and will be given more information about the asylum process.⁴⁸⁰ During this interview, those who are eligible may apply for financial assistance. Those who have “proved their identification” according to the standards of the SMA, and are over the age of sixteen, can be exempted from the requirement to have a work permit in order to work in Sweden.⁴⁸¹ During the asylum-seeking process, if an adult or family seeking asylum have been able to organize their own accommodation, they will be expected to notify the SMA of their address. Otherwise, accommodation is provided through the SMA. The initial asylum-seeking process is also often the phase in which social services enter the scene when unaccompanied minors are involved, as unaccompanied minors are relocated to a municipality in Sweden.

According to “normal” procedures, the asylum-seeker will be provided a public counsel by the SMA if this is deemed necessary, and unaccompanied minors will additionally be given an appointed guardian. Adults, families, and unaccompanied minors are asked to wait their turn to be called for an official asylum investigation. This investigation is described to asylum-seekers by the SMA in the following way: “[w]ith the help of an interpreter, you must say who you are, where you come from, why you are seeking asylum and what you think might happen to you if you have to return to your homeland. You

⁴⁷⁶ It should be noted that fingerprints are taken for those over the age of fourteen. See: Migrationsverket 2021c.

⁴⁷⁷ Humphris and Sigona 2019, 1505.

⁴⁷⁸ Migrationsverket 2021c.

⁴⁷⁹ Migrationsverket 2020b.

⁴⁸⁰ Migrationsverket 2021c.

⁴⁸¹ Migrationsverket 2021h.

will also get questions about your family, your health and your occupational background.” As an asylum-seeker, you “...are responsible for telling all your reasons for seeking asylum, and for providing evidence, if you have any, that you want the Migration Agency to consider.”⁴⁸² After the asylum investigation, the asylum-seeker is called back to another interview at the SMA, where they are provided with either a positive or negative decision.⁴⁸³ A negative decision entails that one can either accept the decision by signing a declaration of acceptance or appeal the decision to the Migration Court and, thereafter, the Migration High Court.⁴⁸⁴ It is usually after this phase that the police may be called to the stage to participate in the performance of the asylum regime.

According to the SMA’s *Handbook on Migration Matters* given to employees at the SMA, the SMA’s main priority is to encourage and motivate a “voluntary” return if a negative decision has been made. If this is not possible and the asylum-seeker either absconds or coercive methods are deemed necessary, the case can be handed over to the police.⁴⁸⁵ The “return process”⁴⁸⁶ can differ depending on whether one is an adult or an unaccompanied minor, but in relation to adults, the SMA website states: “[i]f you do not leave Sweden by the time stated in your decision, you no longer have the right to accommodation and financial support from the Swedish Migration Agency, and you may be given a re-entry ban.” The SMA have the right to place the asylum-seeker under supervision or in detention, and “...can also refer the responsibility for...return to the Police.”⁴⁸⁷ It is at this point in the process that the physicality of the individual can be controlled through our most traditional understandings of power, as the state is seen as less welcoming and more punitive. Supervision entails that the asylum-seeker must, at specific times and dates, report to the police or SMA, whereas detention entails that one is placed in a locked facility, where certain freedoms are curtailed. An asylum-seeker can be placed under supervision or detained so that their identity or right to remain in Sweden can be investigated. If they “...have received, or are likely to receive, a decision on refusal of entry or expulsion...” and the SMA believes they might “...commit a crime in Sweden, abscond, stay away or otherwise prevent or hinder enforcement of the refusal of entry or expulsion,” they may also be placed under supervision or detained.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸² Migrationsverket 2017a.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Migrationsverket 2021d.

⁴⁸⁵ Migrationsverket 2018b, 1234 in PDF format.

⁴⁸⁶ Please note that this term is put in quotation marks to indicate its awkward transition from Swedish to English. It will however be used without question marks for the remainder of this thesis.

⁴⁸⁷ Migrationsverket 2021d.

⁴⁸⁸ Migrationsverket 2021f.

5.2 Background of missing asylum-seekers in Sweden

Asylum-seekers, both adults and unaccompanied minors, can abscond or go missing at any point during the highly organized asylum-seeking process outlined above. Even at the final point, the detention center – where some would argue the most coercive power within the asylum regime is exercised to keep individuals visible – there have been reported disappearances from the locked facilities.⁴⁸⁹ As previously mentioned, according to the SMA, from 2015 to 2020, the agency registered 43,473 asylum-seekers as absconding.⁴⁹⁰ Sweden has received criticism from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for the disappearances of unaccompanied minors in particular, and in May 2016, the SMA had registered 1,829 unaccompanied minors as missing and thereby unaccounted for.⁴⁹¹ Three percent of these disappearances were children between the ages of seven and twelve.⁴⁹² However, as is often the case, the narratives behind what is included and excluded in these statistics and the lived realities that they actually represent are often neglected when individuals are represented as numbers. For example, it is unclear how many of those who disappear do indeed reappear.

Additionally, the SMA does not keep statistics on unaccompanied minors who make it known to either the agency or the Swedish police that they want to seek asylum, but disappear before their height, facial photograph, fingerprints, and asylum-claims are processed and registered.⁴⁹³ In an attempt to gather more information on how many unaccompanied minors disappear during the arrival phase, the authors of the “Lost in Migration” report sent questionnaires to the social service departments in all of Sweden’s municipalities. They found that “[o]f the 255 municipalities that responded to the questionnaire, 35 per cent had unaccompanied children that were placed in arrival housing at some time between 2013 to May 2016. Of them, nearly half (46 per cent) say that at least one child had gone missing.”⁴⁹⁴ As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, however, there are many different factors that can contribute to “(in)voluntary” disappearances such as these, including failed asylum claims and their legal/political/social consequences, wanting/needing to seek asylum in another country after an (un)planned registration with migration authorities, wanting/needing to return to another country or to relocate to another part of Sweden for various reasons, misunderstandings with the authorities, and/or being exposed to human trafficking networks either before or

⁴⁸⁹ See, e.g.: Magnå and Stenquist 2019.

⁴⁹⁰ See: Appendix II.

⁴⁹¹ It should, however, be noted that the exact term used in the report is “missing,” but it is unclear as to whether this is, in this instance, equivalent to what the SMA mean by the term “absconding.” See: Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2016a, 7.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

after arrival in Sweden.⁴⁹⁵ Erika Sigvardsdotter states that, for those viewed as undocumented in Sweden, being missing “...is a kind of resistance without coordination or planning; a situational self-help tactic that avoids any direct confrontation” with the state.⁴⁹⁶

A report by the Stockholm County Administrative Board states that when it comes to unaccompanied minors who disappear in connection with their arrival in Sweden, disappearances can be due to the child wanting to move to another municipality than the one assigned to them, being suspicious or fearful of authorities, having never intended to seek asylum in the first place, and being exploited by human traffickers. When unaccompanied minors disappear after they have been assigned a municipality, this is often due to having received a negative decision on their asylum application or due to fear of receiving a negative decision.⁴⁹⁷ Many of the unaccompanied minors who have disappeared after having received a negative decision have later expressed that they feel that the authorities do not have sufficient knowledge to fully comprehend their situation.⁴⁹⁸ According to a report by the Ombudsman for Children, “[a]bsconding can be a way for the child to take control over their own life or a reaction to fear or insecurity.”⁴⁹⁹ Additionally, the Swedish police have recently emphasized the linkage between human trafficking and missing unaccompanied minors by publicly announcing that criminal gangs have been found to be recruiting and exploiting unaccompanied minors living on the streets in Sweden.⁵⁰⁰

Given that the forces underlying disappearances are highly multifaceted, complex, and often unknown to those working within the state, the ways in which they are processed, reflected on, and managed by state employees vary. As this thesis will show, state employees interviewed for this thesis articulated their reflections on disappearances through moral, ethical, juridical, and/or “bureaucratic/professional” reflections. One interviewee employed as a team leader at an SMA Asylum Unit explained, “[t]o the best of my knowledge, if there are no indications in the case that prove otherwise, then we assume that it is a voluntary disappearance, as there has to be something that gives us reason to believe otherwise.” Later on in the interview, the interviewee expanded on this reflection and explained:

...when they have indeed disappeared or absconded or whatever you now want to call it, if we’ve investigated that as much as possible, well, it kind of ends there. We’re not the police, so you have to learn to deal with people, that there

⁴⁹⁵ These factors are summarized based on my own experience working as a caseworker at the SMA and the individuals whom I was in contact with during that time.

⁴⁹⁶ Sigvardsdotter 2013, 530.

⁴⁹⁷ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2016b, 9-10.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁹⁹ Barnombudsmannen 2017, 13.

⁵⁰⁰ Sjövall and Wirehned 2018.

are people that “go underground,” voluntarily or involuntarily, and you don’t know what happens to them. And in some cases, when you believe that it is highly voluntary, then maybe it’s easier to live with that. But in other cases, it can kind of be like, “what happened to them?”⁵⁰¹

Reflections on who is responsible for disappearances, irrespective of when in the process asylum-seekers disappear, oscillate between placing responsibility on the individual and on Swedish society. In Sweden, asylum-seekers who go missing (or are assumed to have gone missing) rarely gain individual recognition in the media, unless their narrative is framed in relation to national security and the responsibility is put on state institutions, such as the cases of Mutar Muthanna Majid⁵⁰² and Rakhmat Akilov.⁵⁰³ The (suspected) disappearance of Mutar Muthanna Majid in preparation for executing a terrorist attack (which proved to be a false accusation) and the disappearance of Rakhmat Akilov ahead of executing an actual terrorist attack in Sweden were made hypervisible by the media, despite the individuals’ previous anonymity. Their “disappearances” were depicted as active choices made to enable them to plan and commit acts of terrorism in Sweden. In both cases, institutions and citizens

⁵⁰¹ Interview E22.

⁵⁰² In November 2015, a nationwide search for an Iraqi asylum-seeker named Mutar Muthanna Majid was conducted when the Swedish Security Service (SÄPO) publically released his name, age, nationality and photo and stated that he was wanted on suspicion of having fought for the Islamic State in Syria and was currently planning a terrorist attack in Sweden. They claimed to be unaware of his whereabouts in Sweden and the national terror threat level was raised. The whole fiasco ended in finding a confused and what was later confirmed to be, definitely non-terrorist, Majid in the same town as his refugee accommodation. It was later disclosed that, during the whole manhunt, his address had always been registered in the SMA’s system and his name had always been clearly printed on his front door, ironically causing people to question how “missing” within the system he actually was to begin with. Swedish journalist Åsa Linderborg stated, “Sunday the 22nd of November must be one of the most embarrassing days in the history of Swedish press” (see: Linderborg 2015). Majid had been getting on with his everyday life and was unaware of the fact that the Swedish state thought that he had “disappeared” (see, e.g.: Linderborg 2015; Olofsson 2015; and Hjertén and Axelsson 2015).

⁵⁰³ On April 7th, 2017, Rakhmat Akilov, an adult asylum-seeker from Uzbekistan, plowed through Drottninggatan, a busy shopping street in central Stockholm, with a truck, killing five people. Akilov has claimed that his aim was to become a martyr, although no terrorist organization has thus far claimed responsibility for the attack (see: Tagesson 2018). It was later established that a couple of months prior to the attack, Akilov’s asylum case had been handed over from the SMA to the police when he had received a negative decision but not voluntarily returned to Uzbekistan. Considering that Akilov was a citizen of a country known to be difficult to forcefully deport to, the police registered him as wanted, but were not actively looking for him due to these difficulties. In a news article interviewing the head of the police services’ National Operational Department (NOA), it was stated that “[a]ccording to the police, there were no tip-offs and/or information that could be used for surveillance purposes, even though there was an address. But it is rare that people actually live at these addresses, and Akilov was never considered a security threat and therefore the case was never prioritized” (see: *TT* 2018).

were asking: “how do/did we not know where they are/were?!” despite both having had their addresses registered with the SMA.

The framing of migration as a security threat, and thereby the notion of “making and keeping” migrants physically visible, is anything but a new phenomenon. According to Shahram Khosravi, for example, the removal of asylum-seekers in Sweden, in relation to their detention and deportation, is often framed within a discourse of national security.⁵⁰⁴ In 2012 to 2014, for example, the SMA, police authorities and the Swedish Prison and Probation Service implemented the REVA project,⁵⁰⁵ the main goal of which was to increase the deportations of those residing “illegally” in the country, in exchange for receiving more refugees, ascribing to what appeared to be a “one in/one out” narrative. Although the project, as a whole, has been widely criticized, the component that entailed police officers searching for “undocumented” people in the metro stations was particularly denounced. It was reported that people who did not look “Swedish” were forced to hand over their proof of identification to police officers.⁵⁰⁶ Not only did this spark outrage in terms of how structural and systemic racism continuously (re)constitutes and (re)defines notions of Swedishness, but it also triggered debates on how those who were undocumented were surveilled and chased down in a document-obsessed witch-hunt.

As the research shows, in times of heightened security rhetoric, states will attempt to gain control over that which they assume to be volatile and/or unpredictable using measures of surveillance.⁵⁰⁷ Judging by the REVA project and in a time when migration is increasingly being securitized, Sweden is no exception when it comes to operations of surveillance against those deemed to be undocumented. However, concerning my conversations with interviewees at the SMA and social services, there appears to be no consensus in terms of how much or little state employees should speculate, investigate, or engage with the notion of *missingness*. As will be explored in this chapter and in this thesis, this nonetheless affects how the missing subject is produced and how missingness is governed within the asylum regime, as certain discourses are frequently reproduced. To begin with, the terminology used to describe and label the missing is itself a site of struggle.

⁵⁰⁴ Khosravi 2009, 38.

⁵⁰⁵ Migrationsverket (no date).

⁵⁰⁶ Karlsson 2013; For more critique against the REVA project, see, e.g.: Niang 2013; Agö 2013; and Sincic 2014.

⁵⁰⁷ Broeders 2009, 22.

5.3 Grappling with the missing subject

After the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child criticized Sweden for its lack of both action on and investigation into the disappearances of unaccompanied minors in February 2015, the Stockholm County Administrative Board created a network comprising institutions and organizations regularly in contact with unaccompanied minors in Sweden.⁵⁰⁸ The goal of the network was to increase cooperation among relevant actors, increase efficiency, and work proactively to decrease disappearances.⁵⁰⁹ In the official documents produced by the network, guidelines were established, including one on when an unaccompanied minor should be defined as missing. These guidelines are directed at institutions such as the SMA and social services. Not only do they introduce overarching definitions of the terminologies absconding/missing, but they also provide advice on how institutions should divide responsibility and labor among themselves when an unaccompanied minor goes missing. The lack of commonly-accepted and overarching definitions amongst actors working within the sphere of missing unaccompanied minors is deemed, by the network, to be an area in need of improvement, as this will inevitably affect how statistics are reported on both a regional and national level.⁵¹⁰

In reports produced by the Stockholm County Administrative Board, the most commonly used terms are either absconding (*avviken*) or missing (*försvunnen*). In an effort to encourage commonly accepted and overarching definitions, one of the reports proposes the following distinction: “[w]hen is a child considered missing? Absconding is used, primarily, to describe that the child has left their accommodation, while missing is used, primarily, to describe children who have absconded for more than three months and have not been found or come back. When social services close their cases, it should be noted that the child is missing.”⁵¹¹ Despite the attempt to create a distinction among terms, in which absconding is used to describe a shorter period of disappearance, the Stockholm County Administrative Board also acknowledges that not only do these definitions neglect the “(in)voluntary” aspects underlying disappearances, but they are also not as straightforward in practice as they are in theory.⁵¹² For example, the SMA, as well as several municipalities, often use the term absconding when reporting their numbers, regardless of whether or not the unaccompanied minor is later found or has returned.⁵¹³ In mapping how different municipalities related to absconding/disappearing unaccompanied minors, it was also found that: “[o]ne municipality will view children as

⁵⁰⁸ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2017a, 5.

⁵⁰⁹ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm (no date b.).

⁵¹⁰ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2016b, 63-64.

⁵¹¹ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2017a, 18.

⁵¹² Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2016b, 15.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

absconding after a week's absence, while another will view them as absconding after 24 hours of absence."⁵¹⁴ Different temporal definitions of absconding inevitably affect how different municipalities report their numbers both regionally and nationally regarding, for example, when children abscond.⁵¹⁵

Not only do different definitions affect number reporting and the relatively new effort to map what I wish to refer to as the "phenomenon of missingness" on a regional and national level, but the bureaucratic labelling applied can have a direct effect on the lived realities of those unaccompanied minors who disappear and then reappear. Different social services units belonging to different municipalities will differ in terms of when they close the cases of unaccompanied minors who have absconded, as there are no established rules regulating this. According to the National Board of Health and Welfare, an individual assessment should always be made, in consultation with the appointed guardian, accommodation facility, and other relevant actors, regarding when the case should be closed. This, however, makes it more difficult for the child to return to their originally assigned municipality, if they reappear.⁵¹⁶ Thus, the missing subject is produced not only through linguistic labelling that may affect lived realities, but also through a series of practices, in which each step is meant to confirm to the asylum-seeking system that the subject has indeed absconded and is, thereafter, missing. In an effort to establish common routines, the National Board of Health and Welfare has advised social services to introduce local guidelines so that all local actors are on board concerning what do if an unaccompanied minor disappears. For example, in theory, the unaccompanied minor's appointed guardian is responsible for contacting the police when a child goes missing, despite the child's accommodation facility often being the first, in practice, to discover when the child is missing.⁵¹⁷

In contrast to the efforts invested in the mapping of missing unaccompanied minors, there is little room for discussion when it comes to the different terminologies applied to missing adult asylum-seekers. In the 1000+ pages of the official *Handbook on Migration Matters* given to SMA employees, the case for a temporal transition from the definition absconding to missing is not made.⁵¹⁸ The asylum-seeker is either active in the system, or they are absconding, until their case is closed. Missing asylum-seekers are referred to as absconding, even though the term itself is not defined. What can be found in the handbook, however, are definitions of what constitutes a "risk of absconding." According to the "Return Directive,"⁵¹⁹ the following can factor into whether

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 63.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 10-11 & 55.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁵¹⁸ Migrationsverket 2018a.

⁵¹⁹ Please note that this term is put in quotation marks to indicate its awkward transition from Swedish to English.

a “foreigner” (directly translated from the Swedish term *utlänning*, as used in the directive) is at risk of absconding. The “foreigner” must have:

1. Previously stayed away
2. Stated that he or she does not intend to leave the country after a decision of rejection or expulsion
3. Acted under a false identity
4. Not participated in clarifying their identity and therefore made the examination of their residence permit application more difficult
5. Knowingly provided false information or withheld important information
6. Previously violated a communicated re-entry ban
7. Been convicted of a crime that could lead to imprisonment
8. Been deported, by a general court, because of a crime⁵²⁰

According to this logic, the potential missing subject is produced through the presence of one or more of these factors, and measures can thus be put in place to prevent a disappearance.

Like the routines established by social services in relation to missing unaccompanied minors, routines are also established by the SMA to help employees confirm whether or not an adult asylum-seeker is indeed absconding. In a standard produced by the SMA, it is stated that if an adult is assumed to have absconded, the caseworker should attempt to somehow contact them, via telephone or other means. If this attempt proves to be unsuccessful, the caseworker should then make a decision to cut their financial assistance, if they are receiving any. If the asylum-seeker gets in touch after this decision has been enforced, a new decision can be made in which they are granted financial assistance once again. Two weeks after the decision cutting financial assistance has been processed, the asylum-seeker can officially be registered by the SMA as absconding, granted that they have not made any attempts to contact the SMA. Still, an individual assessment can always be made, meaning that an adult asylum-seeker can be registered as absconding before these two weeks have passed. If the SMA is informed of a missing unaccompanied minor, this must be confirmed with the minor’s appointed guardian, relevant actors must be informed, and this must be noted in the child’s case. Otherwise, the case is registered in a similar fashion to the cases of adults.⁵²¹

⁵²⁰ Migrationsverket 2018b, 1230-1231 in PDF form.

⁵²¹ Migrationsverket 2017b, 3-4.

5.4 The everyday terminology of the missing subject

The network's intention of establishing overarching terminologies to identify when unaccompanied minors have become missing subjects is apparent in the official documents examined. Different state institutions and organizations are thus encouraged to adopt the terminologies of absconding and missing to describe the missing subject, dispersing these labels throughout their policies and practices. As previously outlined, "absconding" and "missing," as established by the network, rest heavily on attaching a temporal aspect to the construction of the missing subject. An unaccompanied minor is absconding before the three-month benchmark and missing thereafter. Adults appear to always be, simply put, absconding. One interviewee working within the network explained that they quickly began to notice that different institutions were using different terminologies, thereby generating the need to create common terminologies. They explained:

...[W]hen we began talking about this, the police would say: "But for us, there's no one that goes missing, because we encounter people that no other authority is in contact with." So for them, it was more of an encounter. But for the Migration Agency it was more of: "In our statistics and in our system, it's an absconding child or they've gone missing and we can't reach that person." At the social services, it could be something else, and for the voluntary sector it was more like: "Who are we talking about? We meet everyone." So it has been important for us to somehow define...that when a child leaves their accommodation facility...and are unreachable, then this is the initial stage of absconding since we don't really know and that's maybe where one can work more specifically during this initial acute stage. And then when a child has been gone for more than three months, we say that they are missing since we haven't been able to contact them. So that's like the definitions that we work with so that all the actors don't close the cases quickly but actually keep them open...⁵²²

They also explained that the network chose the word missing as a common terminology to use after the three-month benchmark, the goal being to "...point out that this is a missing child...regardless of underlying causes, voluntary or involuntary. It is a child who has left the system and that is serious."⁵²³ Yet despite these efforts to create a unified approach, those interviewed for this thesis produced discourses that transcended the temporal aspects of these labels, as this interviewee touched on. Despite this clear-cut temporal and theoretical distinction, the everyday usage of these terms by employees at the SMA and social services working "on the ground" appeared to be, at times, anything but clear-cut.⁵²⁴ Despite missingness being "...a two-

⁵²² Interview E07.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ It should be noted that, in the interview excerpts used in this thesis, I have translated the Swedish term *avviken* to mean absconding and the term *försvunnen* to mean missing.

way social situation - you go missing and are experienced by others as missing...,”⁵²⁵ the missing subject itself appeared to be a site of struggle when the ambiguity and uncertainty of missingness began to surface.

As many of the interviewees employed by the SMA confirmed, absconding is the normalized term that SMA employees often use to describe the disappearances of unaccompanied minors and adults.⁵²⁶ As one employee working with the return process at the SMA explained when asked what they felt differentiated the terms absconding and missing, “[a]bsconding’ is more anonymous and maybe not at all personal in any way, very neutral. Whereas ‘missing,’ then we know that we’re talking about a person, a human. In that way, the words ‘absconding’ and ‘foreigner’ can feel...how should I put it...what’s the word? Very bureaucratic, kind of.”⁵²⁷ Absconding was described by some SMA interviewees (as well as one of the interviewees employed at the police) as the correct terminology to use to describe when someone disappears, as this is the term used in legislation, which made it less “charged” than the term missing.⁵²⁸ On the one hand, employees at the SMA also related the term absconding to a “voluntary” disappearance and an intended choice. One interviewee stated, “[w]hen it comes to absconding, we usually think, they’re here somewhere, they’re just not available to *us*.”⁵²⁹ On the other hand, the term missing was described as having an “involuntary” connotation, associated with what a few interviewees would suggest to be human trafficking.⁵³⁰

One interviewee, who had previously worked at an accommodation facility for unaccompanied minors, the SMA and social services, was critical of the common assumption that the term absconding meant that the asylum-seeker had “voluntarily” gone missing, i.e., made an active choice to disappear. When asked what the terms absconding and missing meant to them, they explained:

They [*the terms absconding and missing*] make the job easier...If you break down “absconding,” it means that a person has, for some reason, disappeared. It can be due to criminality, crime- that you have been a victim yourself, chosen to leave the country...but regardless, it’s shameful for Sweden if a child absconds like that. But, it loses its meaning when one says “absconding.” It simplifies the meaning, understanding, and reality behind what has actually happened, and what responsibility everyone has in relation to this, and that everyone has really failed.⁵³¹

Not only can pastoral power be found embedded in this excerpt, as the interviewee expresses that disappearances reflect a failure to protect, in pastoral

⁵²⁵ Payne 1995, 336.

⁵²⁶ See, e.g.: Interview E01, E09, E10, E17, E21, E22, and E30.

⁵²⁷ Interview E09.

⁵²⁸ Interview E15, E21, and E22.

⁵²⁹ Interview E30.

⁵³⁰ Interview E17, E21, and E22.

⁵³¹ Interview E10.

terms, their “flock,”⁵³² but according to this interviewee, the complex lived realities of those who go missing, and the brunt of responsibility behind those disappearances, is simplified by reducing the experience of missingness to the label of, in particular, “absconding.” Another social worker echoed the sentiment that state institutions are to blame for disappearances, stating, “I think that one should use the term missing, because these are people, we don’t give them much of a choice. It’s not like he absconded from the scene of a crime or because he wanted to get away. These are people who have no other choice but to go missing.”⁵³³ Interviewees at the social services were much more inclined to use the term missing throughout the interviews, when compared to SMA employees. The role of agency in relation to the terms absconding and missing was described in a similar fashion by interviewees, regardless of whether the interviewee was in charge of a social services unit or a social worker. If an unaccompanied minor was deemed to be absconding, their disappearance was often reflected on as being planned by the minor and, hence, of free will. Being labelled as missing entailed having less agency and the disappearance was seen as potentially involving other actors, thereby awakening more feelings of concern.⁵³⁴

In addition to “absconding” [*avviken*] and “missing” [*försvunnen*], words such as “undocumented” [*papperslös*], “living underground” [*lever under jorden*], and “hidden” [*gömd*] were terminologies reflected on and used by interviewees to describe those who had disappeared.⁵³⁵ One interviewee stated, for example, that they preferred to use terms such as “live as hidden” [*leva som gömd*], “live underground” [*leva under jorden*], or “live as undocumented” [*leva som papperslös*], rather than solely “undocumented,” as adding the term live to the equation emphasized that this is what the missing are momentarily *doing*, rather than who they *are*.⁵³⁶ This division between what one is doing versus who one is was also echoed in another interview with an employee at the SMA, who described the following in relation to asylum-seekers re-appearing after having been missing:

Interviewee: ...I can’t even count how many families with children that I have sat with, where they’ve said: “My child has had an ear infection on and off the whole year, but we haven’t been able to seek help for it since we’re undocumented.” Every family has said either this, or “I received maternity care at the Red Cross.” And sometimes I ask...I speak without thinking, and I’ll say, “Why? As undocumented, you have the right to medical care [*provided by the state*], why haven’t you sought help?” And they just look at me like, “It would never even occur to me to contact Swedish authorities.”

⁵³² Chamayou 2012, 20.

⁵³³ Interview E11.

⁵³⁴ See, e.g.: Interview E06, E11, E27, and E28.

⁵³⁵ See, e.g.: Interview E02, E03, E10, E13, E19, E21, and E23.

⁵³⁶ Interview E10.

Interviewer: So the legislation and the person's lived reality don't coincide?

Interviewee: Oh yes. I mean, it's interesting because then one understands that you have really understood that you and your stay in this country are illegal. It's almost like you're a walking crime, a crime on two legs, because you can't contact any authority because you're so incredibly illegal. But the only thing that *is* illegal is your residence.⁵³⁷

According to this interviewee, how state employees view those who are undocumented can differ from the actual lived realities of those missing. For those who go missing due to failed asylum claims, the experience of missingness has lived everyday consequences, regardless of whether, in the eyes of, for example, the SMA, the person in her-/himself *or* their stay are deemed to be illegal.

Yet despite these terms often being used by interviewees when speaking about those who have gone missing (thereby assuming that missingness is often a "voluntary" choice), the most common terminologies used by interviewees were indeed "absconding" and "missing." As examined in this section, the everyday discourses produced by SMA employees and social services surrounding the terminologies absconding and missing differ from the temporal characteristics predominantly associated with these terms as put forth by the Stockholm County Administrative Board network. The missing subject is produced as one who is either absconding or missing, i.e., one who has agency versus no agency, one who is reduced to a label versus one who is personified, one who exists in the periphery versus one who must be found. The terminology used to describe the missing subject enacts a hypothetical status in relation to the unknown. As will be further examined in Chapter 6 and 7, the terminology used can thereby have an effect on how missingness is governed and through what different technologies of power.

The practices described in this section, in which state employees use these terminologies, both formally and informally, to define the missing subject, can be portrayed as something called *institutional labelling*. As Rachel Humphris and Nando Sigona explain:

...states categorise, label and count people, and group them attaching particular rights, duties, entitlements and resources accordingly. Institutional labelling plays an important role in the process of creating social structures because designating and quantifying populations does much more than reflect social reality; it plays a key role in the construction of that reality...⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ Interview E02.

⁵³⁸ Humphris and Sigona 2019, 1498-1499.

Hence, those who are physically missing and thereby *physically invisible* in the gaze of state institutions, are instead, through these terminologies, made *conceptually visible* within the system, allowing for some sort of governance to occur. As power is entangled in both knowledge production and in the production of a “truth,”⁵³⁹ the missing subject is produced as a subject who can be “made knowledgeable” through its categorization and, thereby, quantification. As we see in the emergence of biopolitics, when a population is “made knowledgeable” and measurable through technologies of biopower, it is also made predictable through the manifestation of patterns.⁵⁴⁰ Thus, the missing subject is produced as something that must be made visible, not necessarily physically, but through official terminologies, documentation, and through everyday discussions and reflections. As a subject, it is not only socially produced through discourses and the “system of power which surrounds it” but, these discourses also produce organizational identities and invoke organizational practices,⁵⁴¹ as examined in this thesis. It is also “...vital to examine the role of street-level bureaucrats and the bureaucratic processing of asylum seekers, since at this level policy is interpreted and implemented.”⁵⁴² In line with the research by Amalia L. Cabezas, in which she states, the “unified object of my research, the ‘sex worker’, did not exist, was ambiguous, or at the very least was quite an unstable subject,”⁵⁴³ the same can be said of the missing subject. It is, thus far, quite an ambiguous and unstable subject, with many different interpretations and projections made by state employees. Yet this has not hindered bureaucratic processes from attempting to make it, for a lack of better word, bureaucratized.

5.5 Bureaucratizing the term “absconding”

In producing the missing subject and making it visible through labelling and categorizing, the terminology “absconding” becomes bureaucratized. This bureaucratic process renders the missing subject conceptually visible within the system, and therefore perceived, at least formally, as less ambiguous. As previously explained, when produced as *conceptually visible* despite being *physically invisible*, the idea of the subject becomes easier to govern, especially considering that the actual subject itself might be nowhere to be found. Foucault reminds us that power constitutes individuals as subjects (as well as objects) while it circulates in networks.⁵⁴⁴ As Christina Oelgemöller explains in

⁵³⁹ Foucault 1998, 69 & 100.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 143.

⁵⁴¹ Phillips and Hardy 1997, 181.

⁵⁴² Ottosson et al. 2013, 249-250.

⁵⁴³ Cabezas quoted in Daigle 2013, 196.

⁵⁴⁴ Neal 2009, 167-168.

relation to those migrants who go missing due to migration policies and practices, “[d]ead bodies are disturbing, and many of the countries which bear the brunt of finding bodies washed up on their shores are overwhelmed by the task of dealing with such bodies. Disappeared bodies are all the more disturbing as there is no physicality to grasp.”⁵⁴⁵ At the SMA in particular, the terminology is deployed in a way that enables governance, despite there being “no physicality to grasp.” When one is considered missing, they are registered as “AO,” an abbreviation for the terminology “absconding,” until their case is closed.

As one interviewee at the Asylum Unit at the SMA described, many of the terminologies used in everyday work at the SMA are derived from computer codes that are used to digitally register and manage different cases, for example: KU (*konstaterat utrest*, “outward journey established,” i.e. meaning that they have left the country), or AO (*avviken*, “absconding”). The interviewee explained, “I think I use those words. I don’t know if I’ve ever said ‘missing.’ I did however attend a huge conference with the County Administrative Board, it’s a conference series, the whole series is called Missing Children. Then I realized that I was like, what the hell do they mean [*by missing*]? Is their outward journey established? Or are they absconding?”⁵⁴⁶ The system cannot process the ambiguity that missingness can entail in this sense, as deploying the terminology “absconding” produces and simplifies the missing subject as comprehensible and knowable. By using the code absconding, the missing subject is still incorporated into the system (case-wise, not lived reality-wise, as financial assistance, for example, is often halted) until they are expelled, i.e. until “enough is considered enough,” and their asylum case is closed. Thus, this system appears to be built around a logic that entails a dichotomy in which one is either *present* within the system or *absent* from it.

The same interviewee from the Asylum Unit also recounted a story that emphasized the emotional complexities that can arise, as the terminology used influences whether one is considered present or absent within the system. The interviewee was sent abroad on behalf of the SMA to interview refugees who had been shortlisted by the UNHCR for the resettlement program, in this case, to Sweden. The interviewee had been preparing to interview one woman, in particular, and was feeling distressed about the emotional hardship that this specific case embodied, as the woman had suffered extreme adversities. The interviewee described feeling incredibly frustrated when the woman did not show up for their scheduled interview. After a week of the UNHCR attempting to contact the missing woman, they finally found out that she had most probably died at a hospital run by an NGO, but there was no death certificate available, since she had had no identification documents. The interviewee described that they felt a “desperate need” to receive a death certificate. When asked why they felt this way, the interviewee described the following:

⁵⁴⁵ Oelgemöller 2011, 28.

⁵⁴⁶ Interview E02.

Interviewee: Because it was so uncomfortable to leave her there. Where is the body? What have they done with her? Is there no grave? She has a damn registration number...No, now she's just gone. And then we started saying things like: can we take someone else then [*meaning: interview someone else to be resettled to Sweden*]? Take the next person from the list, because she was crossed off.

Interviewer: Literally?

Interviewee: Yes. And I said: she needs to be deregistered [*meaning: her case needs to be closed*]. We need to write off her case because right now it's just open. It has to be removed. In with a new one. The whole time I was like, "I mean, we don't know that she's dead..."⁵⁴⁷

The interviewee described how they realized that the woman was in fact dead when they later spoke to a doctor about the woman's medical condition, and the doctor confirmed that it was nearly impossible to live with that condition, particularly if it went untreated. The interviewee stated the difference between perceiving someone as missing or as dead in the following way: "I knew that we were going home on Thursday and that if we didn't have time to meet her, nothing would happen for her. In that way I feel that it plays a hell of a big role if she's missing or if she's dead, because if she's dead then she's dead, but if she's missing, we might be able to help her."

The interviewee later reflected on this and explained:

I feel that in some sick way, I got the impression that people thought it was better that she was dead than that she was missing. We appreciated that she was dead, because we had had another woman who felt so incredibly bad, she had an episode when she was in our facilities. She collapsed and was throwing up, and had such severe anxiety that she couldn't speak. She was hospitalized and couldn't participate in the resettlement program and was just missing or "missing," she was at a hospital somewhere or at another NGO. In ---- [*name of the city they were in*], anyone can go missing. That felt so much worse, because it was like: oh God, where did she go and where is she now? There they were very quick with withdrawing her case, she wasn't going to be resettled.⁵⁴⁸

The experience above emphasizes the pressure put on state employees to determine whether someone should be considered present or absent within the system, i.e., whether their case should be left open, or in this case "written off" or "withdrawn." Drawing from this excerpt, in its essential biopolitical state, the system can process life, it can process death, but the uncertainty of in-betweenness is disruptive. Theoretically, state employees must make decisions that are comprehensible to the system's biopolitical logics organized around

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

this presence and absence, but in practice these logics are not always clear-cut. Demarcating the categories of presence and absence thereby entails a (bio)power move. Making such a move not only risks simplifying the in-betweenness that missingness might entail, but as explained by the interviewee, it might also entail drastic consequences for the lived realities of those deemed to be missing. In the above scenario, the interviewee described a situation in which the reality of “managing” human life collided with the reality of bureaucratic registration systems. Despite individual caseworkers’ concerns, the physicality of the missing person appeared to only be relevant to the system with regard to how it could be registered within the system, putting caseworkers in, at times, awkward predicaments. The missing subject is consistently produced through the pushing of these boundaries, by those with the subjectifying power to produce who does or does not qualify as missing. The need for SMA employees to decide whether a missing person should be registered according to the bureaucratic logic of either being present or absent within the system was reiterated through the experiences of different interviewees.

For example, many interviewees at the SMA emphasized the importance of taking the disappearances of particularly unaccompanied minors seriously,⁵⁴⁹ but as one interviewee indicated, they were constrained in what they could do by their often limited interaction with those seeking asylum.⁵⁵⁰ One interviewee at the SMA spoke of their previous experience working at a Reception Unit, stating that they found it peculiar that more attention was not given to the disappearances of unaccompanied minors despite this limited interaction, when compared to the disappearances of adults:

Interviewer: Why do you think that no distinction is made, why should one care more?

Interviewee: I think it’s because we don’t see them as children.

Interviewer: Could you explain what you mean?

Interviewee: We don’t really work with a children’s perspective in mind, or see these children as children. Instead it’s an asylum-seeker as an asylum-seeker.⁵⁵¹ It’s a pretty cynical approach, or a very prejudicial approach that has consequences for the child, since we don’t see it as a child, but instead we assume that...it’s someone who is lying, someone who is saying that they’re a child just to get an advantage and that permeates how they’re treated by us. It kind of becomes that if the child has chosen to go missing, then it’s their choice. We wouldn’t think that way if it was a blonde Swedish child, I’m guessing.

⁵⁴⁹ See, e.g.: Interview E02, E17, E18, E19, E20, E21, and E24.

⁵⁵⁰ Interview E19.

⁵⁵¹ The Swedish word used here was *sökande*, which translates into “seeker.” Based on my experience from working at the SMA, this is the bureaucratic term used in official SMA documents to describe the asylum-seeker.

Interviewer: Okay, interesting, do you feel that...is this in general what you understand through the jargon at the unit, how caseworkers and others act, or is this reflected in the routines that you have, if you have routines?

Interviewee: Yes, it's kind of reflected in the routines considering that there aren't routines that...they could be better, I assume. Somehow, if the child makes themselves known to us, let's say at a Reception Unit, and we can then see, huh, social services has let us know that the child is absconded, then we should be able to act in an appropriate way, which for me, would mean bringing the child in for a chat in a private room. During that time, someone else should try to get ahold of social services, because they can intervene considering that it's still a child that is in need of protection, might not know what's best for them, and might not act according to this. But instead, we're satisfied with dealing with the child at the front desk where we say, "Yes, you choose what you want to do" or we deal with the child in the reception hall and say, "You have to choose between continuing to abscond or going to your department at the social services." That feels pretty odd, we don't usually present children with alternatives in that way, but we do it for asylum-seeking children who have no adults [*here*]. That's odd.⁵⁵²

According to the logic produced here, missingness can only be governed if the child is re-written into the system as visible by voluntarily contacting the child's department at the social services, where the label of "missing" would be disassembled. Yet the unaccompanied minor is provided with the alternative to continue to reside outside the system. The child is given an option: to be either present or absent within the system. If their case has not been closed, and the child has contacted the SMA while their case was still registered as "absconding," then this would simply remain registered as such, until it was time to close the case. Ironically, according to the experience of this interviewee, the physicality of the unaccompanied minor's actual state of being in the SMA building (i.e., visible in the gaze of the SMA) is subordinate to their digitally registered status and what this registered status should continue to be – a decision left up to the child to make alone. In this scenario, the physicality of the missing subject disrupts the bureaucratic logic organized as "are you in or are you out?"

The disruption of this logic was also echoed through the reflection of another SMA employee, in which the inbetweenness of missingness instigated a malfunctioning in the system, albeit comical in its absurdity. According to the interviewee, an unaccompanied minor who was seeking asylum had disappeared to another EU country during the asylum process. His fingerprints were registered there and the SMA was informed of this, resulting in the SMA registering him as absconding from his asylum process in Sweden. In the eyes of

⁵⁵² Interview E19.

the bureaucracy, all of this was fine, until he showed up one day in the reception at the SMA, together with the Swedish family with whom he had previously been living. They were extremely angry that he had been registered as absconding. They exchanged words back and forth with the employee in the reception, claiming that he was not missing; he had been trafficked to the other EU country, against his will, and was now back in Sweden, while the employee kept reiterating that he was indeed absconding. The interviewee explained:

And according to my understanding, I've only read about this situation, we insisted persistently that he was absconding, even though he, in actuality, was standing in the reception. I mean, it is comical now, but it wasn't comical then. He was obviously there with his foster family. There was nothing indicating that we didn't believe him, of course not, everyone took the situation seriously, but that was the whole point: for us, he was absconding. If I recall correctly, the family said, "You have to delete this, he never absconded, you can't say that he has, because he was forced to abscond, he was trafficked." And we said, "He's absconding." It was so strange. We were talking about the case and his fingerprints and where they had "roamed around." That's what we were talking about. They were talking about his vulnerability and that wasn't relevant for us in that situation, because the employee in the reception was thinking of one thing and one thing only, and that was "how the hell do we register this?" That's the way it was. And I mean, we are a state institution as well, we can't delete things, we're not allowed to..."⁵⁵³

The relationship between governance and visibility can help us understand the tensions between conceptual visibility and physical (in)visibility, as found in these excerpts. As Martina Tazzioli and William Walters explain, within mechanisms of liberal governmentality, visibility should not solely be understood as "...permanent surveillance exercised on any singular body."⁵⁵⁴ They explain that, "...visibility in governmentality is not oriented- or at least, not primarily- to putting bodies under a surveilling gaze. Actually, it is more on the side of making reality knowable that visibility works in modern governmentality..."⁵⁵⁵ They continue by suggesting that "...if visibility is conceived of more broadly in terms of knowledge- a form of knowledge that makes things and subjects apprehensible and thus governable in some way- it could be argued that visibility is at the core of governmentality..."⁵⁵⁶ According to both of the above excerpts, state employees at the SMA appear to, at times, struggle with the inbetweenness of missingness, especially within a regime in which the term "absconding" is bureaucratized in order to keep the category of the missing subject present within a system, until they are dispelled from

⁵⁵³ Interview E02.

⁵⁵⁴ Tazzioli and Walters 2016, 447.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

it. When an unaccompanied minor who is conceptually visible as absconding within the system becomes physically visible once again, a struggle emerges as to how the individual should be incorporated into the system. Incorporation into the system through terminologies such as “absconding,” allows state institutions to govern populations more effectively, making the missing subject both knowable and visible in their gaze, until it is deemed appropriate to “dispel” of them from the system. This bureaucratization enables the governance of a case rather than the governance of a physical body.

5.6 Quantifying the missing subject

As previously mentioned, when an asylum-seeker is assumed to be missing and is registered as absconding within the SMA, this is subsequently shaped into “statistical knowledge” about how many missing subjects there are assumed to be. The missing subject is made visible through this labelling and quantifying. When cases are closed because of this, these cases can be counted in the decision-production quota. This production quota at the SMA was referred to *informally* by employees as *pinnsystemet*, which translates into “the stick system.”⁵⁵⁷ Even debating the existence (or non-existence depending on who you ask) of this system is controversial among employees. The stick system is said to be a system that entails that the production quota is met. One decision made in an asylum case is seen as one “stick” gained for the unit, as each unit is expected to reach a certain number of decisions in a given period of time. One interviewee who was previously employed by the SMA explained:

[o]ne thing that I remember very clearly from the Asylum Unit, was that if a child had absconded, we were very quick to close the case, because then you got a “stick” for it. It was a very easy decision to write and didn’t take any time at all. It felt good because if you were supposed to write at least two decisions per week, you were then able to get some breathing space. You got an extra point or stick. Now this isn’t formally referred to as such. I know that we could talk a lot about referring to asylum-seekers as sticks and that this is degrading, but it wasn’t like that at our little unit or in our little team. But there was a strict production quota that we were forced to follow and if you didn’t follow it or produce decisions in line with what was expected of you, you were stressed out...But I always remember thinking, “I hope that this person chose to leave themselves and that nothing bad has happened and that they’re trying their luck in another EU country.”⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁷ Interview E10 and E20.

⁵⁵⁸ Interview E10.

Another interviewee working at the Asylum Unit explained this along similar lines, claiming that the stick system affects how quickly cases are closed when individuals are missing/absconding. In relation to closing cases when someone was deemed to be missing, the interviewee stated:

...we were still cautious of not doing it too quickly, but if the stick wasn't in the picture, then I can imagine that maybe we would have waited a couple more months [*to close the case*]. But like I said, I think the stick plays a role. You're presented with the option to close a case, and when you close it, it's done...Back to the statistics thing, if we didn't have the statistics, then the stick wouldn't even matter because an absconding person doesn't even really cost anything...okay, maybe when you start thinking about financial assistance, etcetera etcetera, but not when it comes to accommodation if they're not there...or I don't know how it works, so I probably shouldn't say too much, but I don't think it's such an issue that it needs to be solved straight away....it's pretty chill when they're not even like there...⁵⁵⁹

In this sense, the unit benefits statistically from transitioning the case's status from "absconding" to "closed," and according to this interviewee, thereby the physical invisibility of the missing subject. Hypothetically speaking, according to this logic, the quicker that the missing subject is produced and registered as "absconding," the quicker the case can be closed, transitioning the subject from present to absent within the system, helping units to meet their production quota. This made, for example, the interviewee previously mentioned, critical of using terminology such as "absconding," as they felt, "[i]t doesn't matter what has happened or what has led to this, it's just a word that one uses and then they move on. It's like, [*there 's*] one person less in the system."⁵⁶⁰

When discussing how cases for adults were closed at different units with one interviewee who had previously worked at an SMA Reception Unit, the following conversation unfolded:

Interviewer: How long does it take before someone is established as having absconded?

Interviewee: It varies greatly.

Interviewer: Is there a general routine?

Interviewee: Not then there wasn't, at least not what I remember. And then it also depends on who you're dealing with. Sometimes you want them to abscond as quickly as possible, because then the process is hurried up. In those cases, it's enough that you've absconded for like a day. But, generally, I think we wait a week.

⁵⁵⁹ Interview E20.

⁵⁶⁰ Interview E10.

Interviewer: Can you explain what the difference is? When do you want someone to have absconded?

Interviewee: If it's someone who's annoying, who's been problematic, who's irritated their roommates or the accommodation set-up. Then we are less lenient... "You've been gone for one night, you're registered as having absconded now," in order to get rid of the person. They get assigned a new accommodation when they choose to make their presence known.⁵⁶¹

The interviewee explained that this practice might not be a flattering reflection on the state, but is at times necessary to "solve problems"⁵⁶² (i.e., deal with those who do not, according to state employees, conform to the idea of the "good" asylum-seeker). According to the above excerpt and the experience of this employee, the state employee can even facilitate a speedy process in relation to potential disappearances to better govern what is framed above as "beneficial for all." The status of the physically invisible asylum-seeker is thereby converted into a visible so-called stick when the case is closed. As Helle Stenum states in relation to their research on defining the "illegal migrant," "...regarding statistics and estimates of migrants living in illegality, one could ask whether this growing interest is the 'just another' effort by the state to make a previously invisible or illegible part of the population residing on the territory visible or legible and what characterizes this specific process of legibility?"⁵⁶³ As "...refugees come into being by becoming visible as subjects to be governed...[this] visibility constitutes a form of knowledge production that enables management and control..."⁵⁶⁴ The missing subject comes into being by becoming conceptually visible within the system and is governed through this knowledge production based on quantifying.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined how the missing subject is produced: a puzzle piece in understanding how missingness is governed generally within the asylum regime in Sweden. It has inquired into how the missing subject is produced through terminologies deployed by state institutions, and the informal discourses that are produced, by state employees, with regards to these terminologies. Understanding how the missing subject is produced through biopolitical logics that categorize, label, and quantify what it means to be missing enables

⁵⁶¹ Interview E19.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Stenum 2012, 280.

⁵⁶⁴ Ansems de Vries 2016, 883.

a further examination, pursued in forthcoming chapters, of how missingness is governed and what this tells us about different technologies of power. As outlined in this chapter, the network established by the Stockholm County Administrative Board has attempted to formally produce the missing subject in relation to establishing specific terminologies: *absconding* and *missing*. An unaccompanied minor who disappears is primarily viewed as absconding, until three months has passed and they are official labelled as missing. Yet this chapter showed that, despite this temporal demarcation, everyday discourses, produced at the SMA and social services by state employees, show that the missing subject is actually an ambiguous and unstable subject who goes beyond the segregation implied in these terms. When asked to reflect on these terms, both employees at the SMA and social services could describe absconding as a neutral term, a term which meant that the asylum-seeker had agency in their own disappearance. The term missing, on the other hand, had negative and “involuntary” connotations. Some employees even problematized the usage of these terms in general, due to their simplification and depersonification. Despite attempts to produce what the missing subject is and what it means, it is inevitably a site of struggle, and the inbetweenness that missingness entails creates certain challenges for the system to relate to.

As missingness has the potential to challenge logics of governance that are organized around understandings of presence and absence (you are either present within a system or absent within a system), this chapter examined how the missing subject is formally produced (and informally produced) in an effort to adhere to these logics. To become governable, within the SMA in particular, the missing subject, when labelled as absconding, is produced as something visible, and thereby graspable, knowable, manageable, and as we will see in the forthcoming chapters, in the gaze of state employees: thereby predictable. By making conceptually visible (through institutional labelling) that which is physically invisible, missing subjects can be registered, quantified, and kept present within a system, until their asylum cases are closed/handed over to the police, and they are made absent from the asylum-seeking system. Before they are expelled, however, the absconding asylum-seeker is bureaucratized so that they are still incorporated within the system, but bureaucratic and emotional pressure is put on the individual caseworkers to decide where the line between present and absent is to be drawn. For example, when an individual’s case is closed, this closure can be favorable for overall production quotas. Overall, as shown through the interviews in this chapter, by making the missing subject governable through this specific form of visibility, the *idea* of the missing subject is controlled, rather than the *physicality* of the missing subject itself. The following chapter will continue to explore technologies of power as control in relation to the governance of missingness, from controlling the idea of the subject to controlling the physicality of the subject itself.

6. Power as Control

The previous chapter examined how power produces and makes visible the missing subject through different terminologies. Hence, this chapter picks up where Chapter 5 left off and examines this effect: how missingness is governed through *different technologies of power as control*, in particular disciplinary power and biopower. In this chapter, state employees reflect on and attempt to control the uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity that missingness entails, particularly before missingness has an opportunity to potentially occur, but also after it has, or is expected to have, occurred. In the CMS literature, control is generally associated with coercive practices within the migration management industry/apparatus. Yet by examining the discourses of control surrounding missing asylum-seekers, not only do we find practices of coercive control in, for example, detention centers, but we also find that missingness is *also* governed through accepting that it *cannot* always be controlled. An emphasis is often put on preventing missingness from even occurring to begin with, but sometimes missingness appears to be (in)directly facilitated through the practices of state employees.

In line with Chapter 5, Section 6.1, in this chapter, begins with the first instance of control we find within the asylum-seeking process: the incorporation of the asylum-seeking subject into the system. This is the first instance in which the asylum-seeker's physical presence is required in the gaze of a state institution, before they are incorporated into the system as a digital identity. Following on from the initial registration process, Section 6.2 examines how state employees at the SMA control information provided to the asylum-seeker. Certain information is provided to the asylum-seeker, in the hope that it will prevent them from potentially going missing in the future. Yet, as Section 6.3 examines, other information is at times withheld from the asylum-seeker, as some state employees believe that this information may encourage missingness. Section 6.4 continues to examine more coercive forms of control, through practices at state-provided accommodation centers for unaccompanied minors and, in Section 6.5, for adults, as the potentiality of missingness is controlled through the implementation of specific routines aimed at managing the population at the accommodation centers.

However, the epicenter of biopolitical control is investigated in Section 6.6 and Section 6.7, through an analysis of detention centers. Detention centers are used to render those who were previously missing or are expected to go

missing hypervisible, as their bodies are placed under constant surveillance. This is also the first instance where the physicality of the missing subject is controlled within the Swedish asylum regime, rather than the idea of the missing subject. However, in contrast to the detention center, the remainder of the chapter examines instances in which state employees *allow* missingness to occur and/or (in)directly facilitate it, by allowing “bogus” addresses to be registered within the system (Section 6.8), planning interviews under the assumption that some will go missing (Section 6.9), and allowing those pre-determined by state employees to be missing to actually indeed go missing (Section 6.10).

6.1 Control through bureaucratic capture

As outlined in Chapter 5, prior to how the *missing subject* is produced when an asylum-seeker is assumed to be missing, the *asylum-seeking subject* is produced, enabling initial incorporation into the system to begin. Without this incorporation, there would be nothing to be missing *from*. This becomes the first step in *becoming governable as an asylum-seeker* when applying for asylum in Sweden, and often involves the same procedure for adults, families comprised of adults and children, and unaccompanied minors. It is important to understand this initial stage, as it enables the examination of further *technologies of power as control* throughout the asylum-seeking process, and explains how the asylum-seeking subject is initially made visible within the system. This incorporation requires the physical presence of the asylum-seeker in the gaze of the SMA. Proving one’s identity to the SMA plays an important role not only during the initial registration phase, but also throughout the asylum-seeking process. However, in addition to the narrative of identity being constructed and validated by one’s country of origin and now the Swedish state, another form of identity beyond official documentation is also privileged during this process: *the biological identity*.

As touched on in the previous chapter, to be incorporated into the asylum-seeking system, fingerprints are taken upon registration. The biological identity of fingerprints is extracted, digitalized, registered, stored and cross-referenced with shared systems such as the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (EURODAC), the Visa Information System (VIS) and the Schengen Information System (SIS). The language of fingerprints is analyzed and cross-referenced within the system to discover whether there are any registered identities in any other system-affiliated countries attached to the same set of fingerprints. If this is the case, state employees are also able to map out the mobility patterns of the asylum-seeker, prior to arrival in Sweden. The narrative of the fingerprints is dissevered and privileged over its owner’s verbal narra-

tive. The fingerprints thereby become representative of an accepted bureaucratic truth.⁵⁶⁵ As biological identities are increasingly captured on a widespread level in contemporary Western societies today, philosopher Giorgio Agamben asks, “[w]hat relationship can I establish with my fingerprints or my genetic code?...The new identity is an identity without the person, as it were, in which the space of ethics as we used to think of it loses its sense and must be thought through again from the ground up.”⁵⁶⁶ An identity without the person, so to speak, is thus initially incorporated into the asylum-seeking system.

In contemporary times, “...in the system of biometric identification, no mark needs to be put on people, because the mark is the body itself.”⁵⁶⁷ Hence, when initially seeking asylum in Sweden, as one presents oneself at one of the decentralized SMA offices throughout the country, the mark of the body is forfeited to the authorities. The physicality of life is transformed into the system as a *digital identity*: a combination of official documentation (when available) and one’s biological identity. In this instance, the digital identity becomes a proof of life that is separable from the actual physicality of life. The asylum-seeker thereby becomes, what I call, *conceptually visible* within the system, as *an asylum-seeking subject*. When comparing Sweden to other European countries such as France, a police officer in contact with many missing unaccompanied minors indirectly explained this conceptual visibility in the following way:

[h]ere you’re going to be forced into the asylum process, more or less, you are going to seek asylum. Because everyone is going to grind you down, tell you that you have to seek asylum, because that’s the way that our system is built. But it’s very problematic to have a person who isn’t applying for asylum, that doesn’t have, like, an identity that the authorities can work with. Because if you don’t apply, well, then in principle, you can have an identity every single time you run into the authorities. So there’s a lot to be gained by getting someone into the process, where you have an identity to work with.⁵⁶⁸

According to this interviewee, the asylum-seeker can thereby be coercively “forced” into conceptual visibility, giving the authorities more control as this provides them with “...an identity to work with.” Mark B. Salter states that the border is a state of exception because “[t]he sovereign decides the political status of the individual as they cross the frontier: national, stateless, refugee, foreigner, alien. This decision is absolute...There is a zone of indistinction wherein a traveler possesses not even his/her nationality unless it is confirmed

⁵⁶⁵ For more on the “...the ways in which the applicant’s body matters in the evaluation of the asylum claim,” see, e.g.: Puumala 2017, 73-75.

⁵⁶⁶ Agamben 2011, 51-52.

⁵⁶⁷ Chamayou 2012, 143.

⁵⁶⁸ Interview E14.

by the decision of the sovereign.”⁵⁶⁹ In this case, state employees have the final say as to whether this identity is accepted or rejected in the eyes of the sovereign.

By converting one’s physical visibility into a conceptual visibility, the individual and the group that it comes to represent (read. “asylum-seekers”) begin a biopolitical process of becoming compartmentalized into a “knowable” and measurable subject: the asylum-seeking subject, as their data are processed and stored, giving authorities some sense of control over who is within their territorial borders. Those seeking asylum are made conceptually visible by being mapped, labelled and quantified, as they become, as Rachel Humphris and Nando Sigona describe it: *bureaucratically captured*.⁵⁷⁰ In technologies of governance related to biopower, life becomes something that must be understood and made manageable, with its potentialities predicted,⁵⁷¹ a process that is facilitated through this bureaucratic capture. Once one is made conceptually visible as an asylum-seeking subject, and placed in the hands of governing subjects, according to interviewees, there are, as will be explored, various reasons and ways to prevent those who are seeking asylum from physically disappearing and becoming conceptually visible as missing subjects, through different technologies of power as control.

6.2 Control through access to information

Once incorporated into the system as an asylum-seeking subject, the interviewees debated how controlling what information asylum-seekers may or may not receive during the asylum-seeking process may affect whether or not the asylum-seeker will potentially disappear in the future. In attempting to govern the potentiality of missingness for adult asylum-seekers in particular, interviewees discussed the role of agency in relation to receiving certain information.⁵⁷² Although there appears to be, to a certain extent, an interest in keeping the asylum-seeking subject within the system that they have been incorporated into, the responsibility to stay within that system (i.e., not disappear) is often placed on the asylum-seekers, provided they have received information about what can happen if they “choose” to go missing. For example, when asked whether or not the SMA had a responsibility in preventing asylum-seekers from absconding, one interviewee with a leadership position at the SMA replied:

⁵⁶⁹ Salter 2006, 171.

⁵⁷⁰ Humphris and Sigona 2019, 1505.

⁵⁷¹ See, e.g.: Amoore 2013; and Broeders 2009.

⁵⁷² See, e.g.: Interview E18, E24, E29, and E30.

[c]onsidering that seeking asylum is something that a person has the right to do, and the right to even revoke their application, we use no coercive methods in that way, that we force a person to seek asylum. But we do, however, inform. We have an obligation to inform, partly about legalizing one's stay: that if one doesn't have permission to be in Sweden legally, then one is in Sweden illegally. And also, the importance of completing one's asylum application when one has gotten in touch with us or telling us if they want to revoke it. So, in that way we have an obligation to inform.⁵⁷³

When asked whether certain questions are posed during an interview with the asylum-seeker to determine whether or not there is a risk of absconding, the interviewee further elaborated:

...we don't go into a case suspicious that a person is going to abscond. We don't do that. We assume that the person is a serious asylum-seeker, so we don't do that. We don't begin the conversation by saying, "You're not allowed to abscond." But it's afterwards, that we discover [*that someone has absconded*] in that case. We don't do anything preventative except for informing them that it is important that they complete [*the asylum-process*].⁵⁷⁴

According to this interviewee, the importance lies in "non-coercively" informing asylum-seekers of how the Swedish legislation works, and what is expected of them. What the asylum-seeker then does with this information is up to them. The "serious asylum-seeker" is thereby produced in relation to its supposed opposite, the "missing subject."

Another interviewee, who has worked at many different units at the SMA, also reiterated the importance of providing information to those who have received negative decisions on their asylum claims, thereby also producing the image of a "serious asylum-seeker," and stated the following:

I mean, I think that it's the seeker's [*meaning asylum-seeker's*] responsibility, but the Migration Agency has a responsibility to show what type of authority we really are, the importance of what we do, and to inform the seeker of things that actually correspond to reality rather than the image that we initially give in the application interview. And...about what the consequences can be: "If you don't follow the laws in Sweden, then this and that is going to happen. You've received information about this, and it is very important that you cooperate with the Migration Agency, because if you want to return [*to Sweden*] through a residence permit due to family ties or a work permit (there are other options), then we don't want you having a police record to be an obstacle in any way. Now I don't know what kind of obstacle that is, but it doesn't look good nevertheless. You're supposed to have followed the laws."⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷³ Interview E18.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Interview E24.

The interviewee also explained that, in their view, it was good that the SMA placed responsibility on the individual asylum-seeker to be accessible to the authorities, but stressed that responsibility must simultaneously be placed on the caseworker to provide accurate information to the asylum-seeker.⁵⁷⁶ According to this interviewee, providing this information at a time when it is expected that many will thereafter abscond, i.e., after having received a negative decision, might help reduce the potentiality of disappearances. Not cooperating with the SMA is described through the moralistic language of “not looking good” in the eyes of the state institution. Controlling the communication of information is thereby used as a technique of disciplinary power, in which the asylum-seeking subject is once again (in)formally disciplined as regards what a “serious asylum-seeker” looks like, i.e., one who cooperates, is visible, and does not disappear. According to these logics, the future missing subject is quite leniently prevented from ever becoming, if the “serious asylum-seeker” is produced from the beginning. This production is assumed to be actualized through controlling what information is communicated to the asylum-seeker.

This logic however also assumes that individuals may go missing solely because they have not been properly informed of what might happen if they do disappear. Another employee working with asylum claims at the SMA also voiced similar concerns with regard to providing the asylum-seeker with information that may prevent future disappearances, and stated:

Interviewee: You sort of convince yourself that you have some sort of overview over those who are still here. That doesn't mean that you have an overview, horrible things happen here as well, but it is always unpleasant to be a state employee and to realize that you have no control over what happens to that poor person.

Interviewer: What would having an overview entail?

Interviewee is quiet.

Interviewer: Like, what type of overview do you feel that you need, or that the Migration Agency is responsible for having?

Interviewee: That they get the correct information about their case and that they really understand why it turned out the way that it did. I can have a bloody strong need for that. I want to like ask: “Do you understand why it turned out like this? Do you know what it would mean if you left for Germany now? You are going to end up in a limbo like none other. It's better if you do this...” I don't have any right to say to someone how they should live their life, but it feels so damn important that they understand in this jungle of laws.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Interview E02.

In the above excerpt, the interviewee attempts to balance the belief that the asylum-seeker needs to be able to access transparent information to make informed decisions, but at the same time insinuates that the caseworker knows what is best for the individual seeking asylum (while acknowledging that this is highly sensitive to proclaim). The interviewee describes feeling that they have no control over the physicality of the asylum-seeker, but can control what information is provided and communicated, thereby preventing future disappearances.

In addition to controlling what information is provided and communicated, when the SMA assumes that an adult asylum-seeker is indeed absconding, one of the immediate repercussions entails controlling their right to financial assistance by cutting it off. After trying to first contact the asylum-seeker, a decision is then sent to the asylum-seeker's address to inform them that they will no longer receive financial assistance.⁵⁷⁸ The case is then put on hold for a certain amount of time to see whether this will encourage the asylum-seeker to contact the SMA. If the asylum-seeker "...does not obey, does not inquire, they are 'absconding'."⁵⁷⁹ Use of the word "obey" here reinforces the disciplinary power imbalance of the "discipliner" (i.e., the SMA) versus the "disciplined" (i.e., the potentially missing subject). Not only does this method rely on financial dependency/vulnerability as a point of contact, but to decide whether the asylum-seeker wants to continue being a part of the system, i.e. whether they are a "serious asylum-seeker," they are tested in terms of how dependent they are on the system. As will be examined in the following section, however, some believe that providing specific details regarding the asylum legislation to asylum-seekers could in fact be encouraging disappearances, rather than preventing them.

⁵⁷⁸ It should be noted that an official investigation by a parliamentary ombudsman criticized the SMA for this practice in December 2019. In the case examined in the parliamentary investigation, the SMA had decided that the asylum-seeker in question no longer had the right to financial assistance, as the SMA suspected that he had absconded. This decision was sent to the address that it was suspected that he had in fact absconded from. In the final decision, as a result of the investigation, it was stated that the SMA could not possibly have expected that the decision about financial assistance would have reached the asylum-seeker at the address he was expected to have absconded from. Therefore, in this case, this practice was deemed inappropriate. See: Justitieombudsmannen (JO) 2019.

⁵⁷⁹ Interview E09.

6.3 Control through expiration dates

If one receives a negative decision on their asylum claims in Sweden, this decision will inform them of when they are expected to leave Sweden, "...often within four weeks from the date the decision acquires legal force. 'The decision acquires legal force' means that it has become effective and can no longer be appealed."⁵⁸⁰ This decision is, at present, valid for four years,⁵⁸¹ meaning that one is able to apply for asylum again after this time period has elapsed. It should be noted, however, that during the course of writing this thesis, this timeframe has been highly debated among politicians, causing a divide in parliamentary parties. The parliamentary Migration Committee is currently discussing a proposal to change the rules regarding the temporal span of the expiration date from four years to ten years.⁵⁸² On the one hand, parties such as the Swedish Democrats, a far-right populist party in Sweden, have demanded that the temporal span be eliminated completely, as they believe that it encourages asylum-seekers to disappear in Sweden while they wait for the opportunity to apply for asylum anew. On the other hand, parties such as the Left Party and the Green Party believe that the proposition to increase the timeframe will not change the fact that individuals will go missing. It will instead only serve to inhumanely increase the period of time during which they find themselves in a vulnerable and precarious situation, *as missing*.⁵⁸³

A different timeframe is, however, applicable to cases subjected to the Dublin Regulation. According to the Dublin Regulation, if the asylum-seeker has, for example, applied for asylum in another EU country and then proceeded to apply for asylum in Sweden, the decision to deport the asylum-seeker to the previous EU country cannot be enforced if the asylum-seeker is nowhere to be found after eighteen months. This timeframe is normally enacted from the date that the previous EU country has accepted Sweden's request to reaccept the individual. After eighteen months, from this date, Sweden is responsible for processing the individual's application for asylum instead.⁵⁸⁴ It should be noted that the expiration date of four years for non-Dublin cases is stated clearly on the SMA website,⁵⁸⁵ however the expiration date of eighteen months for Dublin cases was, to the best of my ability to determine, not stated.⁵⁸⁶

Echoing the same reasons as the Swedish Democrats, one employee working with asylum claims at the SMA believed that information such as this is

⁵⁸⁰ Migrationsverket 2021e.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Lann 2020.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Flyktinggruppens Riksråd (FARR) (no date).

⁵⁸⁵ Migrationsverket 2021e.

⁵⁸⁶ Migrationsverket 2020b.

assumed to encourage individuals to abscond from the asylum process and avoid contact with Swedish authorities until their case either solely becomes Sweden's responsibility to process (i.e., 18 months later for Dublin cases), or they are able to apply for a new process (i.e., after four years for non-Dublin cases).⁵⁸⁷ When asked whether the SMA is responsible for preventing individuals from going missing, they explained:

...[i]t's of course important to give them the correct information, to explain what the process looks like, that they have the right to appeal decisions that they don't like, eh...and we sort of have a theory about not informing them of too much, because then that would mean that they could exploit the system and see...what rules we have that they can get away with. If you abscond for a certain period of time, so that this thing with being transferred to another EU country is no longer viable, because you've absconded for 18 months, then you can apply again. Giving them that information a bit too clearly is also wrong, because then you exploit a system in which the rules aren't really supposed to look like that but...⁵⁸⁸

According to this interviewee, giving what is considered "too much" information to those seeking asylum could facilitate "exploitation" of the system, enabling a reversed power imbalance within the system, even though these timeframes have paradoxically been created *by* the system itself. By using the term exploit, a discourse is produced in which the future intentions of the asylum-seeker are both assumed and mistrusted. In this way, disciplinary power through controlling access to information is once again used to discipline the "serious asylum-seeker" into being and to prevent the future missing subject. The interviewee continued to describe this as a delicate balancing act, between providing the asylum-seeker with the correct information, but also providing this information according to the unit's guidelines.⁵⁸⁹

Another interviewee, who had previously worked at different units at the SMA, explained that, depending on which caseworker is assigned to the case and the guidelines of their official decisionmakers and unit managers, providing information to adult asylum-seekers about these timeframes during the interview is viewed as being highly controversial. They explained:

Interviewee: I thought that it was very difficult to communicate Dublin [*meaning informing asylum-seekers if their case was going to be processed according to the Dublin Regulation*] at the Application Unit for example, because I knew that this put them at a crossroads: they would have to either cooperate and be transferred [*to another EU country*] or hide for eighteen months. And a part of that information was a little bit controversial, about what information you're allowed to give, depending on what decisionmaker or boss you consulted. But

⁵⁸⁷ Interview E17.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

I was very open with that information and referred them to the Swedish Refugee Law Center [*a nonprofit organization offering free juridical advice*] in case they wanted to receive more information about the juridical part, and that was a bit controversial at work.

Interviewer: The information that was given, do you mean what's stated in the legislation, that it [*meaning the decision*] is no longer valid after eighteen months?

Interviewee: It expires, exactly. One should of course not encourage people to hide for eighteen months, that's not what it's about. But if they asked, "what alternatives do I have, what rights do I have, how long is this decision valid?," then we have an obligation to give them that.⁵⁹⁰

According to this excerpt, it appears that some SMA employees may view their task as preventing "exploitation" of the system through disappearances, while others provide further contact information to an organization often seen as resisting decisions made by the SMA. Despite different views on the matter, both interviewees express that knowing this information would provide the asylum-seeker with a choice: either to cooperate or to resist. For those who view their task as preventing "exploitation" of the system, responsibility is placed on the adult asylum-seeker to know specifically what questions to ask, or have access to the SMA website, enabling them to interpret the timeframes as established in legislation. According to this logic, having access to too much information about asylum legislation when it is not specifically asked for may *encourage* disappearances.⁵⁹¹ Another tension therefore emerges in comparison with Section 6.2, in which according to those interviewees, knowing and understanding asylum legislation may *prevent* disappearances. Thus, the potentiality of missingness is, at times and once again, governed through the control of information. Nevertheless, the timeframe seen as potentially encouraging missingness has been created by the system itself. Entering this sphere of (in)visibility as undocumented is thus equivalent to entering a temporal and spatial milieu carved out by the system itself.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview E10.

⁵⁹¹ It should be noted that in interviews where cases are to be processed according to the Dublin Regulation, asylum-seekers are asked whether there are any reasons why they cannot be transported to the EU country in question and whether they will choose to cooperate in the case, i.e. do they intend to stay physically visible or go missing? This is informally referred to within the SMA as a "control question." If the asylum-seeker states that they do not intend to cooperate, they are informed that the SMA can take coercive measures in the future, such as issuing a decision of detainment. The asylum-seeker is then asked the control question again, to, as one SMA interviewee put it, "...see if the asylum-seeker will, after all, comply with the decisions we make." See: Interview E17.

6.4 Control through accommodation facilities: unaccompanied minors

Technologies of power as control were also made apparent through the discourses produced by interviewees in relation to the governance of potential disappearances of unaccompanied minors and adults residing in state-provided accommodation centers. Regarding unaccompanied minors in particular, once an unaccompanied minor has been made conceptually visible within the system, the possibility of that unaccompanied minor becoming a missing subject appears to be the next area of concern for governance. By examining the discourses produced surrounding the potential for unaccompanied minors to go missing, most often from their housing facilities, one begins to see how power works through a matrix of technologies of power as control and technologies of power as care. These are two technologies of governance that, specifically in the cases of unaccompanied minors, not only entail complex social relations, but are also at times indistinguishable from one another (as can be found with pastoral power, or what Emma McCluskey refers to as "...a caring biopolitics").⁵⁹² According to one state employee working together with social services to locate unaccompanied minors who have gone missing, the notion that a child may physically disappear can often be foreshadowed, a sentiment also echoed by a couple of interviewees within the social services.⁵⁹³ According to these logics, if social services and accommodation personnel would pay attention and "put together the puzzle pieces,"⁵⁹⁴ then the potentiality of missingness could be predicted, mapped, and prevented.

The interviewee explained, "I would say that there are very many signs prior to [*going missing*]...that the child is anxious, that they stop going to school, that they might start collecting money, that they start preparing. There are a lot of signs to catch sight of before a child goes missing, in every way." To prevent disappearances, one should, according to the interviewee, "...listen to the child, hear what they say, understand what they say, and most importantly, take what they say seriously."⁵⁹⁵ Being able to spot the potentiality of a disappearance on the horizon also entailed, according to one social worker, not only being aware of signs, but also needing overarching surveillance. They explained that one must be especially careful, as "...those who scream the loudest, they're the ones who are visible...At the same time, the calm ones, they often have contacts, and that means human trafficking... We need to make sure that everyone is treated equally and receives the correct

⁵⁹² McCluskey 2019, 69.

⁵⁹³ Interview E12 and E13.

⁵⁹⁴ Interview E13.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid*; A similar discourse surrounding the need to show the children that they are cared for, as well as to listen to them, was verbalized in Interview E03.

information and that we have surveillance on everyone.”⁵⁹⁶ When asked to elaborate on what they meant by surveillance, they clarified that they did not mean any association to camera surveillance, but rather a network of surveillance in the form of the establishment of social relations. Surveillance was framed as a form of inclusion that was produced through meaningful social interactions that aimed to incorporate the individual into the larger population at the housing facility.⁵⁹⁷

Preventing physical disappearances meant that the unaccompanied minor must be incorporated into the daily organization and functioning of the housing facility, as they are encouraged to participate in dinner routines and other social activities. Surveillance, according to this interviewee, also entailed making sure that the unaccompanied minors would not be alone in their rooms or would go for walks by themselves. Staff at the housing facilities were expected to map deviant patterns of telephone usage, based on the idea that “...if they talk too much on the phone, this could also be a risk. It’s very rare for a newly arrived person in Sweden to have a lot of contacts here. It’s a risk connected to human trafficking... That they want to be outside all of the time, that’s also a risk.”⁵⁹⁸ Acts such as exchanging phone numbers between staff members at the housing facility and unaccompanied minors, however, were represented as gestures of both staff availability and approachability.⁵⁹⁹ Another interviewee, who had previously worked at a transit housing facility,⁶⁰⁰ also reiterated the importance of incorporating the unaccompanied minor into the daily organization and functioning of the housing facility, including set mealtimes and spending time together by playing games, talking, or watching television.⁶⁰¹ Needing an overview of the unaccompanied minors so that staff could “gather them up,” as the interviewee explained, was described as keeping an eye on those who would skip set mealtimes and preventing the unaccompanied minors from locking their bedroom doors.⁶⁰²

By incorporating the individual into a larger population in the housing facilities, technologies of biopower associated with notions of surveillance and control find a way to govern the potentiality of physical disappearances/missingness. As research on biopolitics and modes of surveillance explains, populations are secured through “...surveillance and the accumulation and analysis of data concerning behaviour, the patterns which behaviour displays and the profiling of individuals within the population.”⁶⁰³ In the discourses produced

⁵⁹⁶ Interview E03.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ This is a form of accommodation that houses unaccompanied minors who have just arrived in Sweden, before they are allocated a more permanent accommodation.

⁶⁰¹ Interview E12.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 267.

by these interviewees, however, the technologies of power that entail mapping individual behavioral patterns through a “normal/deviant” dichotomy, and the installment of disciplinary routines such as set mealtimes and unlocked door policies, are described as technologies of power as care, i.e., pastoral power. Unaccompanied minors are asked to sacrifice certain individual freedoms such as eating, sleeping, or using one’s phone as one pleases, and this is portrayed by the interviewees as an overall security benefit, i.e., as a protection against the evils of human trafficking.

When asked what responsibility the social services have for preventing unaccompanied minors from absconding, one head of a social services unit explained, “[w]e can never do that, we can’t. We’re not with them twenty-four hours a day, and if their accommodation center, where they have staff around the clock, doesn’t even notice it [*an abscondment*] either, then I don’t think we have any [*responsibility*]. We can’t lock them in.”⁶⁰⁴ Considering that unaccompanied minors are allowed to exit the housing facility to go for a walk or meet friends, surveillance is established through the performative nature of social relations and routines.⁶⁰⁵ According to Marita Eastmond and Henry Ascher, the policies and practices surrounding asylum-seeking children in Sweden are largely torn between “...on the one hand...the rights of the child as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child...and the state’s interest in controlling immigration on the other.”⁶⁰⁶

6.5 Control through accommodation facilities: adults

The potential disappearances of adult asylum-seekers in state-provided accommodation facilities are governed differently as compared to the governance of unaccompanied minors in such facilities. Adult asylum-seekers who do not have a network in place to help them find accommodation or help provide for them during the asylum-seeking process, or who are unable to provide for themselves, are given a place at an accommodation facility provided by the SMA. One interviewee who had previously worked with accommodation questions at the SMA explained that, at times, external accommodation partners would contact the agency and report on asylum-seekers who would frequently disappear from the accommodation facilities. The interviewee explained that often nothing was done with this information, but felt that it was problematic that authorities did not have the same type of contact with asylum-

⁶⁰⁴ Interview E06.

⁶⁰⁵ There is, however, an exception worth noting here, in which unaccompanied minors can be detained according to the law. Unaccompanied minors can be detained according to the Care of Young Persons Act (LVU). They can be “...taken into care on an emergency basis to break a destructive pattern of behaviour” and thereby placed in special residential homes. See: Statens institutions styrelse (SiS) 2016.

⁶⁰⁶ Eastmond and Ascher 2011, 1186.

seekers in larger cities in Sweden, as many would find their own accommodation rather than living at the facilities. When asked what the advantages and disadvantages were of having a closer relationship with those seeking asylum, as is perhaps found in the more rural areas of Sweden, they replied:

I guess the advantage is that the better overview you have over those that you're dealing with, the better decisions you can make. More knowledge is always better. A disadvantage is that there has to be some sort of limit on how much responsibility the authority [*the SMA*] should have. Somewhere it becomes unreasonable if we have to take a social responsibility that isn't ours to take.⁶⁰⁷

When asked what having a "better overview" entailed for the interviewee, they explained that this meant knowing what "composition of people you have at the accommodation [*facility*]... You have to think about what people you put together at the same accommodation, because that kind of sets the tone for how it's going to be. So to put it simply, if I put a lot of young men at the same accommodation center, I can count on problems."

When asked to elaborate on this, the interviewee explained:

Interviewee: Young, single men, which most migrants are...they are often young, single men. But if I mix them up with some families, it gets a bit calmer, but it's at the expense of the families, and that's not really okay either. So it's a difficult balance, how you put together the composition of people at the accommodation center. Sometimes you don't have the opportunity to decide either.

Interviewer: Okay, so the overview is over a group and not on an individual level?

Interviewee: Yes, because we're not so interested in the individual, we're more thinking about the composition of the group. We don't meet the individual because they want to. We have to, in order to do an interview or use our authority, but we rarely go in to check on them and ask, "How's it going today?" That doesn't happen. The only times that we systematically check if everyone is there [*at the accommodation facility*] for example, is if we check that everyone is still living there and where they should be. Then we might go into everyone's room and check where people are. Those that aren't there receive a letter that says: "You weren't present at today's accommodation control. We therefore ask you to visit the Migration Agency when you are back. Otherwise we will consider you to be absconding." That's it.⁶⁰⁸

At the same time as the asylum-seeking population is biopolitically "made knowable," mapped, and labelled in an effort to reduce what the SMA might

⁶⁰⁷ Interview E19.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

assume to be future disturbances at the facility, more responsibility is placed on the individual adult asylum-seeker, than is on unaccompanied minors, to stay “visible.” It can be argued, however, that technologies of power as control are enacted through the policing of mobilities, i.e., being given a spot at an accommodation center entails that you are expected to fill that spot. In a Foucauldian disciplinary power sense, you are expected to adhere to the rules put in place, and this means that you are to be physically visible when it is asked of you. Individuals are thus quantified and their (in)visibility is documented.⁶⁰⁹ When one is assumed to be a missing subject, they begin the transgressional process of being registered as absconding, and thereafter being expelled from the system. At the same time as the individual is disciplined in relation to making oneself visible when appropriate, the population (i.e., asylum-seekers at the accommodation facility) is biopolitically managed as a whole, as the interviewee stated, “...we’re not so interested in the individual, we’re more thinking about the composition of the group.”⁶¹⁰

However, it appears that the SMA does not desire the visibility of *all* asylum-seekers in state-provided accommodation facilities. As stated in the introduction of this thesis, a change in legislation on July 20, 2016 entailed that “...the right to financial assistance in the form of daily allowance and housing ended for those aged 18 and over whose asylum claims have been rejected or who have received deportation decisions and where the time limit for voluntary return had run out.”⁶¹¹ Leading up to this change in legislation, the SMA provided the government with a prognosis stating that they predicted that circa 46,000 asylum-seekers who had formally been denied asylum would “disappear,” because their cases would thereby be handed over by the Migration Agency to the police. According to Per Löwenberg, a group manager at the National Border Police, although some of those “wanted” by the police have indeed left the country without informing any authorities, many are, nonetheless, living “without proper documentation” in Sweden.⁶¹² He went on to state, “[a] vast number of people are going to abscond. It is very problematic. We find roughly between 10 and 20 percent of those who abscond.”⁶¹³

Some of the interviewees claimed that this legislation change did not play out as initially intended, as regards inhibiting financial dependency in order to force return processes.⁶¹⁴ Asylum-seekers who were told to move out of accommodation centers due to this legislation change were instead told to live on the streets or find their own place to live.⁶¹⁵ As Grégoire Chamayou states, “...even if they are considered to be there illegally, migrants are in fact on the

⁶⁰⁹ Interview E19 and E29.

⁶¹⁰ Interview E19.

⁶¹¹ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2016a, 7-8.

⁶¹² Delling 2016.

⁶¹³ Ibid (note: my own translation of the quote from Swedish to English).

⁶¹⁴ See, e.g.: Interview E09, E15, and E19.

⁶¹⁵ Interview E18 and E19.

territory; they reside there physically and socially. So the primary effect of this legal exclusion is not to make them disappear, but to withhold a whole series of rights from them”⁶¹⁶. According to one interviewee, these cases often involved asylum-seekers who had received a deportation order that was enforceable by law, but were nationals of countries that refused to accept their return, putting the asylum-seeker in a limbo where they could neither be detained, deported, nor gain residency in Sweden.⁶¹⁷ In these cases, the state’s paradoxical attempt to prevent potential disappearances, by expelling those with deportation orders from the country, has instead potentially increased disappearances, as those who were previously visible at state-provided accommodation facilities are pushed out into a sphere of potential invisibility. The missing subject is, in this case, paradoxically, produced by the very legislation intended to prevent its existence. As will be examined in the following section however, when state institutions decide that they *want* the missing subject within their gaze, they will *force* them into their gaze, as represented by the site of the detention center.

6.6 Control through detention

Thus far we have examined attempts to govern the *potentiality* of the missing subject through different technologies of power as control: the accessibility of information regarding cases and legislation, as well as keeping asylum-seekers visible at accommodation facilities, either consistently (unaccompanied minors) or when it is asked of them until it is no longer deemed necessary (adults). At times, and especially in relation to unaccompanied minors, technologies of power as control are either intertwined with, or framed through, technologies of power as care. Regarding adult asylum-seekers, the notion of individual responsibility and performing the role of the “visible” and thereby “serious” asylum-seeker is a discourse that has permeated the interviews. Yet the individual responsibility for primarily self-governing one’s own visibility occurs within a sphere where there is a consistent and looming threat of what can occur if the asylum-seeker is deemed to have not taken responsibility: detention. Although we have observed notions of biopower, disciplinary power, and pastoral power at play in controlling the *potentiality* of the missing subject, the detention center is the ultimate epicenter for turning the missing subject into a physically visible “detainee,”⁶¹⁸ through biopolitical control.

⁶¹⁶ Chamayou 2012, 137.

⁶¹⁷ Interview E19.

⁶¹⁸ Please note that this term is put in quotation marks to indicate its awkward transition from Swedish to English. It will, however, be used without question marks for the remainder of this thesis.

The Swedish term for a detention center is *förvar*, which translates to “storage.” As Roxanne Lynne Doty and Elizabeth Shannon Wheatley explain, “[w]arehousing the undocumented is not so much a new technology of power as a supplemental strategy for managing those deemed potentially disruptive to the social order.”⁶¹⁹ Irrespective of whether or not a case belongs to the SMA or to the police, the aim of the detention center is the same and is managed by the SMA.⁶²⁰ According to official detention center guidelines, standards, and routines, “[t]he purpose of the confinement is not to tend [*vårda*] or to treat [*behandla*]...It is to keep an alien accessible [*tillgänglig*] for investigation or deportation.”⁶²¹ One can be detained if their identity is considered unknown to the authorities, they have a deportation order enforceable by law and are encountered by the police, or if there is an assumed risk of absconding.⁶²² Although an adult can be detained for a maximum of twelve months (with consistent reviews during this time), an unaccompanied minor can only be detained in relation to a deportation for seventy-two hours (with the possibility of one extension), and often only in exceptional circumstances.⁶²³ Nick Vaughan-Williams has investigated these centers as an ultimate biopolitical site, as knowledge is both produced and extracted from observing those who are detained and/or awaiting deportation.⁶²⁴ Those demarcated as belonging to “risky” or “unknowable” populations are managed and regulated, because detention center staff are attempting to accumulate knowledge about the individual during this confinement, transforming them into “knowledgeable and governable subjects.”⁶²⁵

One interviewee, with years of experience working at different SMA units including a detention center, explained that detention should not be used as a method of punishment. It should also not “...be like a hotel in any way, you’re not supposed to get there and after a year get released from detention. There should be a purpose as to why there’s a detention center.”⁶²⁶ They explained that the SMA and the police should instead focus on what is referred to as “smart detentions,” i.e., detaining people who have deportations that are easy (and hence fast) to work with, because “[p]utting someone in detention for twelve months as a way of punishment isn’t really...or, I don’t think that was what the legislator really meant.”⁶²⁷ According to this interviewee, detainment

⁶¹⁹ Doty and Wheatley 2013, 429.

⁶²⁰ It should be noted, however, that not all individuals detained in the center have applied for asylum or will apply for asylum. See: Interview E25.

⁶²¹ Khosravi 2009, 41.

⁶²² Migrationsverket 2018b, 1230-1231 in PDF form.

⁶²³ Children are rarely detained, and if they are, it must be together with their legal guardian. See: Migrationsverket 2021g.

⁶²⁴ Vaughan-Williams 2015, 81; For a similar analysis, see also: Khosravi 2009.

⁶²⁵ Vaughan-Williams 2015, 91-92.

⁶²⁶ Interview E24.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

should solely be used as a regulatory method for bringing the asylum process to full closure, rather than being used as a disciplinary method (a method that they explained the police were sometimes criticized for using).⁶²⁸ This logic assumes that the temporary aspect of detention determines whether or not it is disciplinary, rather than the *act* of detaining *itself*. Another interviewee employed as a team leader at a detention center agreed with the sentiment that the aim of detention should be that detainees should leave Sweden as “smoothly” and “painlessly” as possible, suggesting that, despite this aim, the realities of everyday life at the detention center were exhausting:

But bizarre things happen that you would never see out in society. Or I think, in what other work environments would you see people experiencing these kinds of weird situations and mental health issues? I’ve thought about this, in other institutions: prisons, you’re supposed to rehabilitate people so they can return to society. Psychiatric hospitals – there you can medicate and there’s where you might have people with mental disorders. Elderly care – ...there you’re supposed to be old. What more categories do we have in society where you normally place people?...I think that at the detention center, all these categories are gathered under the same roof. You’re supposed to take care of both the elderly and those with mental disorders. Some have committed crimes and the purpose is not to rehabilitate someone to return to society as a good Swedish citizen. That contradicts the whole idea of the detention center. And it’s difficult for staff to manage all of these categories that, otherwise out in society, there are different institutions for. The detention center is meant to manage everything, all ages, all psychological diagnoses, all types of disabilities, for example.⁶²⁹

As the interviewee described sites that have often been examined in Michel Foucault’s work, such as the prison system or the psychiatric institution, the main aim of the detention center is to keep a population of bodies physically visible and thereby accessible until deportation, the goal being to regulate, manage, store, interact with, watch, and attend to them, despite their various and differing individual needs (needs the staff might not be trained to “deal with”). Disciplinary power is found operating, as “...it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility.”⁶³⁰ As will be examined in the following section, this power paradoxically keeps both detainees’ bodies and detention center employees’ bodies physically visible within the spatial milieu that is the detention center.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Interview E25.

⁶³⁰ Foucault 1991a, 187.

6.7 Control by making “detainees” visible at the detention center

When asked whether they felt that within the detention center, some detainees were more visible to staff than others, the same interviewee explained that those who are most visible are often those who engage with the staff through different activities, as well as those who need extra resources due to health issues. The interviewee explained that those who keep to themselves in their rooms are made visible through different routines at the detention center.⁶³¹ All detainees are provided with a weekly one-on-one “social conversation” with staff members. This conversation concentrates on how they are doing/feeling and is documented in their case file, and at this detention center in particular, about two social activities for the unit were organized a week, the aim being to “disrupt the everyday and think about something else.”⁶³² One interviewee at the detention center described the following in relation to social activities:

Interviewee: ...One makes sure to establish contact with them [*meaning detainees*], not that they’re detainees [*original word used: förvarstagna*] but that it’s a Kalle or a Pelle. What are Kalle and Pelle doing and what do Kalle and Pelle like? We’ve become better at making sure that we do activities...Now we keep statistics on what activities we’ve done and there should be one activity a day, to try to get them going.

Interviewer: What do you think the reason for this is?

Interviewee: We’ve had a lot of suicidal people who have expressed that they could do something suicidal. We’ve received a lot of ill people, both physically and mentally. So I think one wants to manage them in a better way by creating a certain type of contact with them.⁶³³

“Managing” according to this excerpt, can be equated with making visible. Another quantifying routine at the detention center that helps staff “better manage” the population at the unit, through notions of visibility, entails conducting a head count five times a day. When asked what a head count involves, one of the team leaders replied:

You have a photo of everyone at the unit, and then you go out and check off that you see that person in their room, for example. There you also have an opportunity to make contact. If it’s someone that you might not have seen all day, maybe you’ll ask like, “but now it’s dinner time, aren’t you going to eat?”

⁶³¹ Please note that all interviewees consulted were employed or had been employed at the same detention center. Routines may vary depending on the detention center.

⁶³² Interview E25 and E32.

⁶³³ Interview E04.

So, so it's also an opportunity to see that person, even if they are quiet and introvert and aren't moving around in the unit as such... And those [*meaning staff*] that stand in the kitchen, they notice: "this person hasn't eaten either lunch or dinner, is that something we should be worried about?" And then we check with the group that works nights, "is this person up at night? Is this person eating then?" And they're like, "yes, yes, yes, God, that person's up all night long and eats loads of food in the evening." "Okay, that's good, then we don't have to be worried about that person."⁶³⁴

In this excerpt, the act of making visible five times a day those who have already been forced into visibility, by being placed within this specific biopolitical site, is told through discourses of care, rather than surveillance and control. Bodies are kept in a constant gaze of visibility as they are observed, quantified, hypothesized about, spoken of, spoken to, and managed, regardless of whether this is done for the functioning of the center and/or out of concern about an individual's wellbeing. Another team leader interviewed at the detention center explained that those who have expressed suicidal thoughts or tendencies can be "counted" even more times a day. When asked if these counts are done to keep the individual alive and to check that they are not hurting themselves, or whether they are done to try to motivate wellbeing, the interviewee explained:

...we have a psychologist that comes to the detention center twice a week and decides who she wants to meet...if they need support or medication, she makes that call and then tells us what we should think about. But at the actual unit, I would just say, that we check whether the person like has a pulse.⁶³⁵

According to this excerpt, one could assume that the detention center prioritizes the preservation of the physical body to achieve the state's end goal of deportation. Thereby, in its ultimate form of biopolitical control, the function of the detention center is to govern by keeping visible, keeping accessible, and keeping *alive*.

The detention center itself "...represents a case of biopolitical order...as 'detainee bodies, health, and physical state become thoroughly invested by politics- the responsibility of the institution and the site of multiple battles for control'."⁶³⁶ Although many of the routines mentioned at the detention center are talked about through discourses of having the wellbeing of detainees at heart, other routines are described solely through discourses of security. Security procedures include checking that walls and windows are intact during a shift while also doing a count, and doing a round to check the premises, excluding accommodation rooms once every hour.⁶³⁷ If detainees are deemed

⁶³⁴ Interview E25.

⁶³⁵ Interview E04.

⁶³⁶ Hall quoted in Rodin 2016, 278.

⁶³⁷ Interview E26.

to be posing a threat to the law and order of the detention center, they can put into an isolation room for a maximum of three days, separating the individual from the collective as a disciplinary practice. At one detention center in particular, some of these isolation rooms have recently been rebuilt, and are now equipped with camera surveillance, a toilet, and tiles to facilitate cleaning if body fluids are used as a form of resistance.⁶³⁸ Some interviewees voiced their concern over the newly installed camera surveillance in certain spaces on the unit, not just limited to the isolation rooms, as well as the newly implemented staff uniform. Consequently, the detention center was described by interviewees as increasingly mirroring the prison system.⁶³⁹ As one team leader at a detention center explained:

[i]t worries me a bit how the institution is developing, because it feels like we're moving from a migration agency to a correctional facility, or we're changing the detention centers so that they look more similar to prisons or jails, and the approach is supposed to match. We have many people in leadership positions that are from correctional facilities and want to implement that way of working. It becomes difficult for those of us who have been here since before, to keep up with that way of thinking and maybe agree with them. But then, it's a bit of a split question, because we have, like I said, gotten more difficult clients. They demand more security, demand more of a tougher attitude. Those that we isolate and move [to a jail] have often [been] violent with state employees at the detention center. The incidents are a bit more difficult compared to before.⁶⁴⁰

Another interviewee described an environment where those with a previous background of having worked in correctional facilities are increasingly hired, and explained that they believe these staff members are often more authoritarian in dealing with detainees, and incidents resulting in detainees being put in isolation often involve these staff members in particular.⁶⁴¹ When asked to elaborate on what they had described as a similar transition from detention center to correctional facility during their time working at the detention center, one interviewee explained:

Just that we have begun differentiating between detainees [*förvarstagna*] and staff more. Just this: how we look, how we are dressed. Before, you couldn't always see the difference between staff and detainees. But now it's very clear that we are the state and there you are. It's good and bad. It might be easier to get someone to listen when...one is a bit more like, here is the state that is speaking rather than here is ---- [*name of interviewee*] speaking... Sometimes it feels good to have the backing of the uniform in certain situations, and sometimes it feels like it is delimiting.⁶⁴²

⁶³⁸ Interview E25.

⁶³⁹ Interview E04, E25, and E26.

⁶⁴⁰ Interview E04.

⁶⁴¹ Interview E26.

⁶⁴² Interview E25.

In this excerpt, the visibility of the uniform is spoken about in relation to the power of the state, an authoritarian power that the interviewee wants to enact at times, but not always, despite its multitude of manifestations. The individual control that the detention center employee might feel over that image and its performance is, however, increased or diminished if one is made to wear a uniform. Despite staff describing, albeit at times hesitantly, routines that reinforce the power of the state through the detention center, a few interviewees increasingly described feeling as if they were governed and made visible in the gaze of the state *as employees*.

This included descriptions of long and difficult work shifts that made it difficult to have a private life outside work, the emotional aspect of working with individuals who might be suffering psychologically, and feeling surveilled.⁶⁴³ As Gavin J.D. Smith claims in his analysis of CCTV operators as either empowered watchers or disempowered workers, "...far from being a unilateral and static property, power in this milieu, much like a restless tide, flows back and forth in interaction between subjectivity and screen, self and spirit, body and bureaucratic organization."⁶⁴⁴ One interviewee explained that they felt that their own movements were regulated through the installment of cameras in certain spaces at the unit. In addition to feeling powerless over spatial control, they also described feeling powerless over temporal control, explaining: "...[b]ecause that's the thing sometimes, that time in a detention facility is against you...you can very rarely control your own workday...You can't control anything. Certain things you can control, yes, we serve lunch at like 12. But if everything goes haywire at 12, then we have to deprioritize lunch, even though that's never happened. But life comes before everything else."⁶⁴⁵ Detention center employees may therefore feel "...simultaneously empowered, disempowered and re-empowered."⁶⁴⁶ As the missing subject is governed as a visible subject in the detention center through technologies of power as control, the ultimate spatial manifestation of this biopolitical site appears to simultaneously discipline the state employee into visibility, as the apparatus also "...supervises the individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising."⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴³ Interview E03, E04, and E26.

⁶⁴⁴ Smith 2009, 133.

⁶⁴⁵ Interview E26.

⁶⁴⁶ Smith 2009, 126.

⁶⁴⁷ Foucault 1991a, 176-177.

6.8 Lack of control through private accommodation

As just outlined, the detention center is indeed the site where the governance of biopolitical life is manifested to its fullest extent and subjects are disciplined, within the Swedish asylum regime. It can be argued that the overarching threat that the asylum-seeking subject can be detained, if deemed to be a missing subject and found, is enacted so that those seeking asylum will perform physical visibility throughout the asylum-seeking process when it is asked of them. Although many would argue that the detention center itself serves a disciplinary function, operating through technologies of power as control by reminding asylum-seekers of what can happen if they go missing (“you did not cooperate, and therefore we will make you cooperate”), its mere existence also serves as a regulatory technique of power. As Doty and Wheatley state, “[i]n the case of undocumented migrants, ‘proper management’ takes the form of detention and the threat of detention, which functions as a discipline exercised upon the entire body of undocumented residents.”⁶⁴⁸ This disciplinary and regulatory apparatus is important to bear in mind when examining how state institutions encourage self-governance, as it can always be found lurking in the shadows. That being said, the extent to which self-governance is encouraged through the SMA materialized in interviews when interviewees spoke of the aspect of private accommodation. As will be examined, there appears to be a lack of control in relation to the registration of private accommodation, which consequently may (in)directly facilitate missingness.

Sweden has, what can be argued to be, a unique accommodation system for adult asylum-seekers as compared to countries such as Australia, where asylum-seekers are detained in what are continuously revealed to be atrocious conditions during the asylum-seeking process.⁶⁴⁹ According to the Australian Border Force website, for example, in Australia:

[a] person who does not hold a valid visa is an unlawful non-citizen, and must be detained under the Migration Act 1958. Whether the person is placed in an immigration detention facility, or other arrangements are made, is determined using a risk-based approach. The safety of the Australian community is an important factor in this decision. In Australia, immigration detention is administrative not punitive. It helps us manage our temporary entry and permanent migration programs.⁶⁵⁰

In comparison to the heavily securitized language reproduced on the Australian Border Force website, the SMA explains the means of accommodation for asylum-seekers in Sweden in the following way on its website:

⁶⁴⁸ Doty and Wheatley 2013, 429.

⁶⁴⁹ See, e.g.: Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2018; Davidson and Vasefi 2018; and Boochani 2019.

⁶⁵⁰ Australian Border Force 2019.

[i]f you have no place to live while you wait for a decision on your asylum case, the Swedish Migration Agency can help you. You can also choose to arrange for the accommodation on your own; for example, you can stay with relatives or friends. If you arrange your accommodation yourself, you must inform us of your address so that the Swedish Migration Agency can contact you.⁶⁵¹

Asylum-seekers are technically allowed to choose where to live, as long as they are able to arrange for the accommodation themselves and the address is registered in their case file with the SMA. It should be noted, however, that while writing this thesis, a new legislation change was recently passed in parliament regarding asylum-seekers providing their own addresses to the SMA. As of July 1, 2020, asylum-seekers that want to live in an area that has been declared, by the government, as having “socio-economic challenges,” will not have the right to financial assistance.⁶⁵² Although those who choose private accommodation may receive a slight increase in financial assistance when arranging their own accommodation rather than living in something provided by the state (granted that the accommodation is not in an area excluded by the government), the increase is so minimal that it can hardly function as an incentive. When asked, in general, whether or not the SMA has a responsibility in preventing asylum-seekers from disappearing, a few interviewees would compare the Swedish accommodation system to that of other countries, describing the Swedish one as the more humane/caring option.⁶⁵³ One interviewee at the SMA replied, “[i]f they abscond, they abscond...should we put them in detention centers instead?!”⁶⁵⁴ While another interviewee at the SMA explained, “[o]therwise we will end up like ICE in the United States. We’d have to detain people, and that’s not very humane, or have our own police officers that enforce the law. Then the Migration Agency wouldn’t be called the Migration Agency anymore, it would be called something else...”⁶⁵⁵

The notion that asylum-seekers can hand in addresses to their own private accommodation and that this is, by and large, unregulated by the SMA was at times discussed by the interviewees. As one interviewee working as a case-worker at an Asylum Unit at the SMA explained:

⁶⁵¹ Migrationsverket 2021a.

⁶⁵² Morgan Johansson, the Justice and Migration Minister, explained the reasoning behind this legislation change in the following quote: “It is necessary to address the increased segregation and other problems that asylum-seekers’ own housing can cause, especially in areas with socio-economic challenges.” Although this legislation change may not be directly correlated with the governance of missingness, it does point to an example of how migration is increasingly being governed through technologies of exclusion. Most of the interviews in this thesis, however, were conducted before this new technology of control aimed at excluding certain areas under the banner of “integration” was implemented, and the interviewees therefore did not touch on this. See: Justitiedepartementet 2019.

⁶⁵³ Interview E20, E21, and E30.

⁶⁵⁴ Interview E20.

⁶⁵⁵ Interview E21.

Certain addresses...one has searched for certain addresses at times. It's pretty open in Sweden, you can see who lives there [*at an address*]. You can see who is registered there, and sometimes you get a bit of shock, when it's a whole lot of people in the same apartment, but with different nationalities and that. As long as they're not married (which you can also see, whether they're married or not), when they're not married, you think: how can so many people live in the same apartment? How? But I also know that the rules for registering in Sweden are so incredibly relaxed, so anyone can get registered anywhere. There's probably absolutely no control...that's probably all that I can say about that really.⁶⁵⁶

As certain addresses reappear again and again as proof of accommodation, state employees will, at times and as mentioned in the above excerpt, speculate about the impossibility of hundreds of individuals living at the same address, and the lack of control that this entails on the part of state institutions. If an adult asylum-seeker provides an address that has a reputation of being repetitive within the system, the asylum-seeking subject is at risk of being viewed as a potential missing subject. As another interviewee working with asylum claims at the SMA explained:

I understand that a lot of people [*meaning those seeking asylum*] want to stay in Stockholm, because this is where the jobs are. But because our system is so narrow and we need to register an address and it doesn't just accept registering an e-mail address or a telephone number, for example, many asylum-seekers in Stockholm are forced to hand in an address where they're not actually living. They might actually be renting on the [*so-called*] "black market" or living at their workplace and so forth. I can understand that. I've even said to asylum-seekers myself, "You don't have to live there, but you have to be able to receive your mail there." But of course, when it comes to many people being registered at the same address, you also get worried that perhaps they're indebted to the people whose addresses they are paying to use. Who are these people?...We've had these types of conversations with the police and tried to figure out what kind of addresses they are, but they also find new ways around it...⁶⁵⁷

It should be noted that although some interviewees described engaging in dialogue with the police about reoccurring addresses,⁶⁵⁸ in the above excerpt, the caseworker also makes a point of telling those seeking asylum that, in their opinion (and this could be debated), the SMA is predominantly concerned with how information (e.g., interview times where their physical presence is needed) will reach the asylum-seeker. Their physical visibility, when it is not called upon by the SMA, is thereby treated as irrelevant. Vulnerability is also

⁶⁵⁶ Interview E20.

⁶⁵⁷ Interview E17.

⁶⁵⁸ Interview E17 and E29.

treated as something that occurs elsewhere and due to other powers, rather than as a product of the asylum regime itself.⁶⁵⁹

Another interviewee at the SMA also explained that it is not in the SMA's interest for asylum-seekers to abscond, as the SMA often has information they need to have. The interviewee explained that, as an authority, the SMA needs to have an overview of those who are registered within the system, especially in the cases of unaccompanied minors, as their vulnerable positions can easily be exploited. When asked what it meant to have an overview of asylum-seekers, from an authority perspective, the interviewee further elaborated that:

[t]hey are available to us when we need them to be available. That they correspond when we contact them, either by calling them on the phone, via text message or e-mail, or face-to-face when we ask them to come in. Besides that, the Migration Agency doesn't have any interest, beyond what the case requires, in keeping track of the asylum-seeker. Considering that we accept that individuals submit P.O. box addresses [*as proof of individual accommodation*], that's a sign that the Migration Agency doesn't really need to keep track of cases.⁶⁶⁰

An "overview" in this sense means that asylum-seeking subjects make themselves visible solely when it is asked of them. Another interviewee working at an SMA "Return Unit"⁶⁶¹ in a more rural area of Sweden described that, instead of having an issue with reoccurring P.O. box addresses (which may be more common in larger cities), they had observed that some asylum-seekers register their proof of address as either an address belonging to active volunteers in the area, or the Swedish Church (*Svenska Kyrkan*). As in the excerpt above, when asked whether or not they feel a need for the SMA to know where asylum-seekers are physically residing, or whether it does not matter as long as they make themselves visible when called upon, the interviewee replied:

Yes, yes, well...I'm kind of having a life crisis when it comes to working at the SMA, so I'm not really sure where I stand when it comes to these questions. Yes, as a civil servant, in order to be able to do my job, then of course it's better to have a real address so that I know that the person really is accessible and I can look at it in a different way: the person is cooperating with us then and

⁶⁵⁹ Another interviewee at the SMA claimed that, in their opinion and considering how much access to information the SMA has, the SMA should coordinate and map certain information, such as reoccurring addresses, to prevent asylum-seekers from being exploited and/or disappearing. This interviewee in particular also explained that this is important for society as a whole, as "[w]e want to know what happens in our society. We want to know that strange things aren't occurring right under our radar." See: Interview E19.

⁶⁶⁰ Interview E09.

⁶⁶¹ Please note that this term is put in quotation marks to indicate its awkward transition from Swedish to English. It will, however, be used without question marks for the remainder of this thesis.

cooperating with their decision. As a private person I might have another opinion, but yeah...⁶⁶²

Once again, the act of registering the asylum-seekers address is framed in terms of being able to reach the asylum-seeker with information, rather than knowing or surveilling their physical whereabouts on a daily basis. Rather than being portrayed as coercive control, it appears to be a bureaucratic procedure that emphasizes a mantra that is often produced with regard to adult asylum-seekers: it is your responsibility to make yourself visible only when the SMA requires your visibility, unless you break that “trust.” Certain addresses are still registered, despite their suspicious reputations and their association with the production of the missing subject. Leading up to the act of possibly detaining someone, knowing the physical whereabouts of those seeking asylum does not appear to matter, until it begins to disrupt their conceptual status: have they absconded or have they not? A specific technology of disciplinary power is dispersed throughout the asylum process, as it can be argued that the notion of what can happen if one does not cooperate (i.e., detainment), becomes self-fulfilling in producing the self-governing and “serious” asylum-seeker, a subject that is often portrayed in contrast to its counterpart: the missing subject.

6.9 Planning for missingness

In addition to allowing for the disappearances of some through the registration of private addresses, interviewees described situations in which the SMA and social services prepare for and allow for the disappearances of others. In this sense, missingness is governed not only through various technologies of power as control, but also through how it cannot always *be* controlled. When this is considered, the risk of missingness is therefore managed through, at times, the uncertainty that it entails. Paradoxically, that which cannot be fully controlled is, thus, to a certain extent, controlled by embracing the fact that it cannot be fully controlled. For both adult asylum-seekers and unaccompanied minors, this uncertainty appears to be governed through the technology of pre-determining and pre-labelling the asylum-seeking subject as a potential missing subject, based on nationality alone. As with bordering techniques in general, “...complex identities and claims to belonging...” are often turned into “...objects of danger or benefit” by various apparatuses.⁶⁶³ When asked whether they had ever screened a case or prepared for a case and felt that the

⁶⁶² Interview E30.

⁶⁶³ Salter 2008, 378

asylum-seeker was not going to show up to the interview, an interviewee with many years of experience working at different units at the SMA explained:

[y]es. Unfortunately, even with asylum... I mean, there are seasons. Even if that sounds horrible, you know what nationality will come and seek asylum more than another nationality during certain seasons. And sometimes, you have a feeling in you that this person isn't going to show up. But it's not like I act on that and close the case. It's only a feeling, but it's a generalized feeling and I might be ashamed about it, but we're just human. It's just that. But people who often come from countries where there are conflicts, war, or something else, show up, often show up. Most will show up. We're talking about very few nationalities that don't always show up.⁶⁶⁴

Assuming that someone will disappear due to factors such as their nationality was something that evoked feelings of shame in more than one interview. Emotional responses were ignited if, for example, someone disappeared who did not fit the mapping of who is expected to disappear. This was often related to sex, nationality, and chances of getting asylum.⁶⁶⁵ The biopolitical pairing together of, for example, certain nationalities with specific patterns and trends affects how certain cases are subsequently managed, as this production of knowledge slowly becomes representative of a specific truth. As the assemblage of identity and mobilities are read to mean something, the potential missing subject becomes produced. As one interviewee at an Asylum Unit at the SMA explained:

I recognize this from when I was a caseworker or a decisionmaker, and I definitely think that it is still spoken about in this way in that group still: that there are certain nationalities, definitely, that one might see as more likely to abscond, just like the SMA speaks about nationalities that have a higher frequency of receiving negative decisions. So, in the same sense, one has identified that there are certain nationalities or groups where the risk of absconding is higher, simply put. And also that, yeah, it's kind of a bit...the caseworkers take it a bit differently depending on who it is. Is it a person or a seeker [*meaning asylum-seeker*] that is within that group that one might expect that an abscondment might happen in a different way, then it gets handled more routine-like. But...we had an example here at the unit a while ago, a stateless woman with...children who absconded, and we can't really see the reason behind why that would happen, and there I know that the caseworkers went along with it and were present in assessing that yes, she is gone, but [*that they*] experienced not knowing where this person was as pretty difficult.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁴ Interview E21.

⁶⁶⁵ See, e.g.: Interview E02 and E10.

⁶⁶⁶ Interview E22.

Although this is often criticized by interviewees, its entrenchment in the everyday bureaucratic corridors is still acknowledged.⁶⁶⁷ As one employee working as an expert with the SMA explained in their interview, “[y]ou know before the interview who will disappear.”⁶⁶⁸ As explained in the excerpt above, the discourses produced inevitably leak into and penetrate practices, and to a certain extent, how missingness is governed, especially concerning its potentiality.⁶⁶⁹ When interviewing an employee at an Application Unit at the SMA, the interviewee explained that there are certain practices enforced at the unit related to the mapping of nationalities that are meant to reduce the potentiality of disappearances. Adult asylum-seekers with specific nationalities are called to their asylum interviews straight away, bypassing the initial introductory interview. These nationalities are overrepresented in the statistics on those who receive predominantly negative decisions on their asylum claims. It is commonly assumed that they are “unserious” in their claims, only registering their visit to Sweden as an asylum-seeker to be exempted from the obligation of having a work permit. By providing them with a date for their asylum interview upon arrival, as opposed to later in the process, the employee explained that there is less of a chance that “...the paper will disappear, take too long until it reaches the asylum-seeker [*when sent in the mail*], and that they therefore do not show up to their asylum interview.” The employee also added that this practice entails that “[y]ou can make a decision pretty quickly in these cases.”⁶⁷⁰

Another interviewee working with what is called the return process at the SMA explained that, when interviews are booked with asylum-seekers in order to explain the conditions of return once they have received a negative decision on their claims, disappearances are also expected. The interviewee explicated, “...we don’t book individual rooms and meeting times for everyone. We will call eight people to one occasion, eight people to the next occasion and eight to the next one, and depending on how many people show up, we have caseworkers who can hold those meetings. So we’re talking: if we call sixty people, twenty to thirty can abscond.”⁶⁷¹ The interviewee described that this practice came about as a result of the “reality” of the situation, as the SMA cannot afford to call people to individual meetings when there are clear patterns of potential abscondment in some cases. The interviewee explained that, in their opinion, these patterns include not having shown up to meetings previously or often cancelling meetings, having registered a P.O. box address, and patterns of abscondment related to specific nationalities.⁶⁷² From my own

⁶⁶⁷ Interview E16.

⁶⁶⁸ Interview E01.

⁶⁶⁹ See, e.g.: Interview E01, E09, E17, and E22.

⁶⁷⁰ Interview E17.

⁶⁷¹ Interview E09.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

experience of working with asylum interviews, the same procedure was, during certain periods, in place for their actual asylum interviews. They were at times over-booked, as mentioned above, based on the assumption that individuals with specific nationalities would potentially abscond in relation to the interview.

Although one can presume that the SMA has a financial incentive in the creation and mapping of a collective based on nationality that predetermines future potentialities, thereby bypassing the normal routines for processing asylum claims, one can also wonder how this affects how caseworkers individually relate to these cases if they are already pre-determined as potentially missing. Sweden is, for example, one of the EU countries that claims to not have an official “safe country of origin list” due to the principle that all cases are to be managed on an individual level rather than collectively based on country of origin.⁶⁷³ Despite not ascribing to an official list, the mapping of so-called trends due to nationalities and its production into “statistical knowledge” affect practices, as the adult asylum-seeker and the seriousness of their asylum claims are thus, to a certain extent, pre-determined. Although the sovereign logic can be disrupted – as on some occasions, more asylum-seekers will show up to these over-booked meetings than expected, and at other times, fewer will show up than expected – the SMA has shaped an overall practice in which the institution can attempt to financially save resources by accounting for the inevitability of missingness. The system adjusts to its potentiality, as “...risk has become a fluid concept that refers to techniques of making future events knowable so that they can be acted upon in today’s decisions.”⁶⁷⁴ It thereby capitalizes on the creation of the potential missing subject. As will continue to be examined in the next section, the creation of the potential missing subject is often associated, by state employees, with specific nationalities.

6.10 The pre-determined missing subject: Moroccan unaccompanied minors

When it comes to unaccompanied minors, technologies of biopower aimed at managing populations do not always appear to have an interest in managing *all* unaccompanied minors. The association of some unaccompanied minors with a collective identity (often related to specific nationalities) was also portrayed as a pre-determinant of disappearing. Unaccompanied minors in general, as an imagined collective group, were portrayed by two interviewees as partaking in mobility patterns that were unheard of compared to the mobility

⁶⁷³ European Commission (no date).

⁶⁷⁴ Huysmans 2014, 102.

patterns of minors with Swedish citizenship,⁶⁷⁵ with one interviewee describing some unaccompanied minors as choosing to live a “vagabond life.”⁶⁷⁶ Not only is a specific knowledge/power production at play when actions of individuals are interpreted and mapped, in order to then be associated with collective identities, but missingness risks being portrayed as a consequence of a “hyper-mobility” (subsequently contributing to the exotification of asylum-seekers as nomadic), rather than being a consequence of the asylum regime and its exclusionary logics. Portraying unaccompanied minors as an inherently hyper-mobile group neglects how mobilities are utilized as techniques of governance, as “migrants’ movements are controlled, disrupted and diverted not (only) through detention and immobility but by generating effects of containment keeping migrants on the move and forcing them to engage in convoluted geography.”⁶⁷⁷ Instead, the mobility patterns of unaccompanied minors are portrayed as a disruption to the asylum regime, rather than as a consequence of it. As will be examined in this section, in the interviews conducted for this thesis, this disruption to the system was, at times, associated with missing unaccompanied minors from Morocco.

According to SMA statistics, in 2018⁶⁷⁸ and 2019,⁶⁷⁹ for example, Moroccan was the second nationality, after Syrian, represented for most asylum applications by unaccompanied minors. For two interviewees at the SMA, Moroccan children, albeit often described as a collective group, were a group that was specifically at risk for human trafficking, and their disappearances should be taken seriously.⁶⁸⁰ Yet, although discourses representing them as a group at risk and therefore in need of protection by the Swedish state were indeed produced by interviewees,⁶⁸¹ they were also portrayed by other interviewees⁶⁸² as a group that embodied risky and deviant behavior. In an interview with a police officer in contact with many missing unaccompanied minors, the interviewee reported that, despite always conducting a risk analysis when a minor disappears, they experienced a different discourse when it came to North African children, as “...it is very common that you abscond if you’re unaccompanied [*meaning an unaccompanied minor*] from North Africa. It has kind of become like, “Oh well, he’ll go missing again.” There’s a fatigue in the system, not just at the police, but I experience it at the social services, with appointed guardians, the Migration Agency, their accommodation [*facility*].

⁶⁷⁵ Interview E06 and E08.

⁶⁷⁶ Interview E27.

⁶⁷⁷ Tazzioli 2019a, 1; Similarly to this, Bigo argues that “[l]ogics of passage and mobility are stronger than logics of containment.” See: Bigo 2014, 213.

⁶⁷⁸ Migrationsverket 2019.

⁶⁷⁹ Migrationsverket 2020a.

⁶⁸⁰ Interview E02 and E16.

⁶⁸¹ Interview E02, E14, and E16

⁶⁸² Interview E12, E27, and E28.

Everyone's just like "yeah, yeah, yeah.""⁶⁸³ This fatigue that the police officer experienced within the system in relation to North African children is not inseparable from the overall Swedish narrative within the media, state institutions, and politicians that refers to Moroccan children as "street children" (in Swedish: *gatubarn*). Unaccompanied minors from Morocco are often assumed to have lived on the streets/outside the system in Morocco, and prior to reaching Sweden.⁶⁸⁴ As one interviewee employed at the social services and previously employed at an accommodation facility explained in relation to their experience of disappearing Moroccans, "...they're like street children. They don't want contact [*with you*] and you notice that. It's difficult to get contact with them and I think that they've already decided before they come then."⁶⁸⁵

Inseparable from colonial logics⁶⁸⁶ that depict a racialized and feral "child belonging to the streets," these children were often depicted by the interviewees as ungovernable and pre-determined and pre-destined to disappear. When an interviewee with a leadership position within the social services was asked whether they had experienced increased attention being paid to missing unaccompanied minors since the "refugee crisis," they replied:

[y]es, it was much more common then. But I also think that it was another type of unaccompanied [*minor*]. I think that before, so many more teenagers came who wanted, how should I put it: "I want a better life, I want to have an opportunity to get an education in a safer society where there isn't war and there is a better future." Of course, they still exist, without a doubt, they are the majority. But another group has been added to this. There are these teenagers who have grown up in tougher environments, been involved in criminality, drugs, for very many years. I mean, understand me correctly, but more luxury-seekers. You understand? "I'll travel around and find a...a world or opportunity that gives me something for the moment, but I won't think too much about living there or educating myself."⁶⁸⁷

This distinction between unaccompanied minors as the "serious asylum-seeker fleeing from war" versus the "deviant luxury-seeker" was reproduced when the interviewees compared Moroccan unaccompanied minors to another group categorized by nationality: the Afghani unaccompanied minors. Regardless of whether the interviewee believed that human trafficking was or was not to blame, unaccompanied minors from Morocco were described as not actually being interested in applying for asylum in Sweden.⁶⁸⁸ After an

⁶⁸³ Interview E14.

⁶⁸⁴ See, e.g.: Björklund 2015.

⁶⁸⁵ The interviewee, however, explains later on in the interview that they do not think that all Moroccans are "the same." See: Interview E12.

⁶⁸⁶ See, e.g.: Rollo 2018.

⁶⁸⁷ Interview E27.

⁶⁸⁸ Interview E14 and E28.

interviewee within the police was asked whether they had experienced the same fatigue within the system that they had described for North African children, with Afghani children, they replied:

[n]o, there they don't disappear and abscond to the same degree, because when it becomes relevant [*to abscond*], it's at the end of the process when they've received their negative decisions or their age has been written up. Otherwise...they come here with a tremendous confidence and hope in building their lives here in Sweden. They are extremely good at learning Swedish... [*have*] been here for three months and can almost have a conversation. I still get surprised almost every day that they are so good at the language and that they're really here to create a life, compared to the Moroccans, who know, "I won't be allowed to stay, there's no basis for asylum. I have one, two, three, four, five years in the asylum process, but then I won't be allowed to stay" like. It shines through so clearly when there are two guys: both have been here for six months, one goes to school and knows the language, while the other doesn't speak a word of Swedish. There's something wrong then. Why have you not gone to school when you're a child, and why have you not learned any of the language?⁶⁸⁹

Although this police officer hints at this being an issue deriving from something more systemic when compared to the "luxury-seekers" reference, as a collective group, assumed temporal pasts govern future potentialities.⁶⁹⁰

The mapping of behaviors and assumed reasons for seeking asylum contribute to the production of a specific knowledge in which asylum-seekers are not only portrayed through collective groups of nationalities, but these groups are subsequently put into a dichotomy of the "serious, traditional and governable asylum-seeker" versus the "unserious, deviant, and ungovernable asylum-seeker," in which one can pre-determine and thereby plan for this missing subject. Afghani children, also depicted as a collective group, were represented by a handful of interviewees as those who learn the Swedish language, go to school, are ambitious, believe in the idea of a better future as "provided" by Sweden, and are disappointed when they receive a negative decision.⁶⁹¹ It is surprising for certain interviewees when they disappear, as it clashes with the idea of them as both "calm" and "lovely."⁶⁹² Moroccan children are portrayed using the opposite connotations. As one social worker explained:

...[s]ome we know, like North Africans, that they don't want to be in Norrland [*the northern region of Sweden*], they're going to abscond, we already know that. But we explain, "This is the way it is, you're not going to get help. You

⁶⁸⁹ Interview E14.

⁶⁹⁰ See, e.g.: Amoores 2013.

⁶⁹¹ Interview E12, E14, E16, and E28.

⁶⁹² Interview E03 and E12.

have to stay in your municipality.” And we have to say that 5000 times so that they’ll understand, but they’re still going to abscond and come back.⁶⁹³

The production of the Moroccan unaccompanied minor as a pre-determined missing subject creates a fatigue in the system, allowing them to escape the gaze of the state institutions, thereby destabilizing the notion of the state as a protector of *all* children. The portrayal of their pre-written temporal and spatial past through the labelling of “street children,” entails a group that has already disrupted the logic of a system and can be sacrificed within this system as well. As will be examined in Chapter 7, the pastoral power often found operating in relation to unaccompanied minors, thereby, turns into a pastoral hunt in which the sacrifice of the few (i.e., Moroccan unaccompanied minors) is used to protect the whole (unaccompanied minors deemed governable).⁶⁹⁴ They are “managed” in a sense through their depiction as ungovernable, as the vulnerabilities that they encounter are not necessarily framed by interviewees in relation to an asylum regime that does not only pre-determine them as a missing subject, but that also never really accepts them as an asylum-seeking subject to begin with. Moroccan unaccompanied minors have become hyper-visible through their invisibility. As with certain adult asylum-seekers, their disappearances are, to a certain extent, pre-determined and thus, planned for. In this sense, the idea of the missing subject is controlled, rather than the missing subject itself.

6.11 Conclusion

This chapter examined how missingness and governance relate to each other through *different technologies of power as control*. The state employees interviewed in this thesis often produced discourses of control in their interviews. Consequently, this chapter found that missingness is governed through technologies of disciplinary power and biopower. Even though a majority of the migration literature equates missing people/the disappeared with death, Christina Oelgemöller states, “...there is a technology to deal with the living and with the dead; the disappeared stay outside of the possibility of control.”⁶⁹⁵ However, as this chapter has shown, the disappeared can, at times, stay within a possibility of control, or at least state employees within institutions such as the SMA hope that they can control missingness from occurring to begin with. In comparison to the bureaucratization of the missing subject in Chapter 5, this chapter shows that the *actuality* of how missingness is governed reflects

⁶⁹³ Interview E03.

⁶⁹⁴ For more on so-called pastoral hunts, see, e.g.: Chamayou 2012, 20-22.

⁶⁹⁵ Oelgemöller 2017, 33.

the messiness of the social world, despite this control. There appears to be no single way of governing missingness, confirming that state employees do indeed struggle to both control and manage the uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of missingness.

Although this chapter has shown that the detention center is the site where the physicality of the individual is controlled and made visible to the greatest extent possible within the Swedish asylum regime through technologies such as disciplinary power and biopower, it has also shown that the *idea* of the missing subject is often controlled rather than the *physicality* of the missing subject itself. Different technologies of power as control are often at the forefront of preventing the potentiality of missingness, either through controlling access to information or through surveillance routines at state-provided accommodation facilities. By examining the right to private accommodation for adult asylum-seekers, a more lenient form of control emerges, as the SMA appears to only beckon adult asylum-seekers into physical visibility when it is deemed relevant for the processing of their cases. As the interviewees proudly explained, invisibility can occur between these performative acts of physical visibility, as long as adult asylum-seekers are somehow able to receive information at their registered address. Thus, in between these calls for physical visibility, the asylum-seekers' whereabouts are irrelevant for the SMA, as their digital identity has already been incorporated within the system, enabling conceptual visibility within the gaze of state institutions.

If the "trust" to self-govern is broken (i.e., the adult asylum-seeking subject becomes or is expected to become a missing subject despite these "prevention" attempts), the most extreme form of visibility is enacted: the detention center, where self-governance quickly morphs into regulatory/punitive state governance. Yet in comparison to this manifestation of coercive control, this chapter also investigated how the SMA controls missingness by *allowing* it, to a certain extent, to occur. Thus, missingness is also governed by the fact that it *cannot* always be controlled and is sometimes (in)directly facilitated through the practices of state employees. By planning for its future potentiality, the institution has capitalized on resources that may have otherwise been over-spent. The SMA also allows for the occurrence of missingness through the sacrifice of those produced as missing or ungovernable to begin with, enabling the overall machinery to continue to carry on functioning in relation to bureaucratic logics of governance organized around the dichotomy of presence and absence. Hence, the state, as reproduced through the eyes of state employees, monopolizes not only on control, but even on "non-control." The following chapter, however, will continue to explore different technologies of power regarding the governance of missingness, but with a specific focus on technologies of power that are embedded within and operate through discourses of care, as is often the case when speaking of unaccompanied minors.

7. Power as Care

The previous chapter examined how missingness is governed through different technologies of power as control, in particular disciplinary power and biopower. This chapter further examines how missingness and governance relate to each other by looking at how missingness is *also* governed through *different technologies of power as care*, in particular pastoral power. In this chapter, state employees continue to reflect on and attempt to control the uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity that missingness entails. Discourses of care often present themselves in relation to interviews about unaccompanied minors who could potentially go missing or are missing. Yet, by examining discourses of care surrounding missing unaccompanied minors in particular, this chapter also finds that care and control are often intertwined. Care is, after all, “...deemed to lie at the heart of modern practices of governmentality.”⁶⁹⁶ Hence, where technologies of pastoral power are found operating, it is not uncommon to find technologies of biopower as well, resulting in what Emma McCluskey might refer to as a “caring biopolitics.”⁶⁹⁷ This chapter finds that, once again, state employees struggle to deal with the inbetweenness that missingness can entail, as state employees reflect on their own roles as governing subjects.

Section 7.1 begins by outlining how discourses of care are often produced in relation to unaccompanied minors and the potential trafficked missing subject, as the state and, thereby, state institutions are portrayed as their “safe-guarder.” There is thus an emphasis on keeping asylum-seekers *within* the system, in order to prevent them from vulnerabilities existing *outside* the system. Section 7.2 continues to examine the way in which the system is portrayed, through discourses of care, as something that the asylum-seeker is expected to want to stay *within* rather than choosing to go missing. The “Swedish Dream” is assumed by state employees – a dream in which the Swedish system is too good to *want* to leave. Section 7.3 examines how the disappearances of unaccompanied minors are expected to be prevented through social relations to state employees. These relations were described by some interviewees through discourses related to motherhood. When unaccompanied minors do in fact disappear, however, some state employees emphasize the need to physically find the missing subject to (re)incorporate them back into the system, once again

⁶⁹⁶ Johnson et al. 2020, 279.

⁶⁹⁷ McCluskey 2019, 69.

emphasizing the importance of social relations. Section 7.4 examines how the idea that state institutions must prevent missingness is resisted, as some state employees embrace the inbetweenness of missingness by keeping in touch with missing subjects or treating missingness as an act of resistance against the SMA. Section 7.5 concludes with an analysis of how interviewees have attempted to relate to the idea of the missing subject in general, often through expressions of empathy and sympathy, despite their own role within the system itself.

7.1 Care portrayed as the safeguarding of children

The idea of the child as both vulnerable and in need of protection has penetrated the Swedish discourse on the child since the beginning of the past century. It is often associated with the construction of a strong Swedish welfare state in the 1930s, which portrays the state as the guarantor of children's welfare.⁶⁹⁸ The Swedish state is, thereby, expected to fulfill the role as the safeguarder of children, as performed through specific legislation. On January 1, 2020, for example, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child officially entered into force and became Swedish law.⁶⁹⁹ Hence, it can be expected that this discourse of the Swedish state as a safeguarder of children has permeated the way in which missingness is governed, depending on whether or not the missing subject is, or is expected to be, an unaccompanied minor versus an adult. When asked whether there is a difference in the way that cases are handled depending on whether an unaccompanied minor goes missing or an adult goes missing, one employee at the SMA explained:

I mean, it always hurts much more when a child goes missing because it's a child, and you think...now I still have to relate to maybe an Afghani boy that has never in his life really been outside his home village. He goes to Sweden, and what does he do? How will he make it? Straight away I come to think of the station [*meaning the train station*], heroin...that's the first thing I think of, because it's very often associated with this, and there's been a lot of heroin use. Yeah, it probably hurts a lot more. I think that an adult is able to handle it much better, that probably makes a bit of a difference for me.⁷⁰⁰

This interviewee equates an unaccompanied minor going missing, and the precarity this could entail, with a personalized feeling of hurt. According to the interviewees, drug use, ending up in criminal networks, human trafficking, as well as other forms of sexual and economic exploitation are risks that are often

⁶⁹⁸ Eastmond and Ascher 2011, 1192.

⁶⁹⁹ Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 2018.

⁷⁰⁰ Interview E24.

associated with being a missing subject as an unaccompanied minor, thereby evoking feelings of concern.⁷⁰¹

As one interviewee working with missing unaccompanied minors for the region of Stockholm explained, “[t]here is a parallel society that many are talking about. It’s growing and becoming bigger, and it grows even stronger if we don’t do anything. So these are the consequences that society is facing if we don’t take these things seriously.”⁷⁰² What occurs outside the system is often referred to in Swedish as *skuggsamhället*, which directly translates to “shadow society,” or by some interviewees as a parallel society, a site where invisibility thrives. In this way, vulnerability is often portrayed as something that is creeping in the shadows *outside* the asylum-seeking system, rather than being *produced* by the system itself, enforcing the idea that if missingness can be prevented, the child will be less vulnerable.⁷⁰³ Hence, as examined in the previous chapter, we find the idea that social relations established at the housing facilities and through meetings between social workers and unaccompanied minors, centered on making the unaccompanied minor *feel* visible, are meant to *keep* them physically visible within the system, where they can be protected (i.e., governed).

The state’s role (and thereby the state employee’s role) in *protecting* asylum-seekers from becoming missing subjects was predominantly made visible when interviewees spoke about the explicit risks of human trafficking, for both adults and unaccompanied minors. For example, one interviewee working at the Return Unit at the SMA explained in their interview that there are different groups that are at risk of being trafficked, whether they are adults or unaccompanied minors. When asked to elaborate, the interviewee illustrated that:

[i]t’s more based on experience, what one knows [i] about sexual exploitation but also other [types of exploitation]...what common background these affected people share. There are certain regions, maybe West Africa, but also as I’ve understood it, Eastern Europe, maybe not for sexual exploitation but more exploitation in the workplace. Age, educational background, gender...and the address that one registers in Sweden is also an indicator, as there are many addresses that are suspicious within these contexts. When a person maybe absconds before the process is finished, it doesn’t have to mean anything, it could be anything, but if there’s a lot of these things then we should be awake and maybe not just register the person as absconded, but even raise the issue that it could involve human trafficking.⁷⁰⁴

Being “conscious” of different dynamics of identity interacting and being assembled into patterns or trends was also echoed by another interviewee with

⁷⁰¹ Interview E07, E14, E16, E17, and E24.

⁷⁰² Interview E07.

⁷⁰³ See, e.g.: Humphris and Sigona 2019.

⁷⁰⁴ Interview E16.

many years of experience working at different units at the SMA. The interviewee explained that after asylum-seekers abscond, they will sometimes physically reappear at an SMA unit, often when they are allowed to, according to the law, seek asylum again. When asked what employees do when this happens and if employees ask questions, the interviewee replied:

Interviewee: Yes, of course we do. The agency is very aware of [this]. Even if the person isn't here, even if the person is residing in the country illegally, it's in the agency's interest to make sure that the person hasn't been exploited and that's very important. I feel that the SMA has tried to map out what the person has done, partly to protect the person but even to hold perpetrators accountable and to report if the person has been exploited or yeah...yeah, exactly. We try to ask where the person has been and how they have provided for themselves, in order to paint a picture of that time. It's a pretty long time, four years is a very long time.

Interviewer: Is that something that you are taught to do? Like when you worked as a caseworker, I imagine that that's when you had these types of interviews, is it something that you've been taught and that's why you ask these questions or is it something that is assumed?

Interviewee: ...We do it for the seeker [meaning asylum-seeker], for the customer's best interest, and not because we're interested in what the person has been up to. I also think that, as an agency, it's our duty to document what trends there are related to people absconding. We have a duty to document, I'm guessing, as a state agency, not just to make decisions related to asylum applications, but even to document what trends exist, how and what happens when a person, in the language of the law, absconds to avoid deportation.

Interviewer: Yes, why do you think that it's important, do you think, to document trends and such?

Interviewee: But as I said, from a human perspective I find it natural to...even if the person doesn't have a legal status here in Sweden, it's in the state's interest to see that people that are in this country don't get exploited, and if that happens, other processes get put into gear. It can be a question of human trafficking for example, and if we don't ask these questions, then we're not engaging with people who have experience from this time and the question falls through the cracks... SMA is not just an agency that, that monitors laws, Sweden's laws, but tries to look after the individual, the customer's interest. I know it sounds like I'm still employed there, but that's actually what I've learned there and what I am assuming, to apply the law based on what's best for the customer, not the other way around.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁵ Interview E21.

In the excerpt above, a neo-liberal model is laid out in which the asylum-seeker is the *customer* and the customer's interest is to be protected from exploitation, a *service* provided by state institutions such as the SMA. Yet according to these two interviewees, the SMA has another role as well: to be aware of trends and patterns that can lead to someone becoming a potential (trafficked/exploited) missing subject, and to retroactively map and document these trends and patterns. As Claudia Aradau explains “[v]ictims of trafficking cannot remain pure presence; their risk identity needs to be specified for the purposes of preventing human trafficking. Thus, the governance of human trafficking relies on technologies of delimiting and categorizing ‘high risk’ groups, groups which are at risk of being trafficked.”⁷⁰⁶ Specific knowledge is thereby produced based on the assemblage of this information by state employees at the SMA, as to who is at risk of being exploited and disappearing, and what happens when and if this occurs. The potential missing subject, this time in need of protection, is thereby once again produced by state employees, and the mapping and documentation of ‘high risk’ trends and patterns are meant to prevent the governable subject from becoming ungovernable.

This section shows that the state is, through state employees, framed as the safeguarder not only of children (however, apparently not *all* children as examined in Chapter 6),⁷⁰⁷ but also of human trafficking victims/survivors. Both are deemed worthy of protection from the vulnerabilities seen as occurring *outside* the system, and thereby worthy of being kept *within* the system, for the time being. The protected versus protector discourse produced by the interviewees can be understood through a pastoral power lens, as it advocates for “...the wellbeing and moral propriety of both individuals and communities simultaneously...”⁷⁰⁸ According to this discourse, not only is the individual deemed worthy of protection potentially protected, but society is simultaneously protected against the flourishing growth of an invisible and ungovernable parallel society. What we find is the tip of the iceberg of a reoccurring trend in this chapter itself: how missingness is governed through a care and control paradox, or through “... a caring biopolitics.”⁷⁰⁹ Not only are those deemed to be innocent (i.e., worthy of help) demarcated from those deemed to be guilty (i.e., less worthy of help),⁷¹⁰ but those demarcated as vulnerable are also biopolitically regulated through the assemblage and documentation of patterns and trends. Technologies of power as control in the form of biopower

⁷⁰⁶ Aradau 2004, 269.

⁷⁰⁷ Through what can be described as pastoral hunts, Chapter 6 examined how Moroccan unaccompanied minors were described by interviewees as pre-determined to go missing. This contributed to a discourse in which they were deemed to be ungovernable, and thereby sacrificial within the system.

⁷⁰⁸ Martin and Waring 2018, 1293.

⁷⁰⁹ McCluskey 2019, 69.

⁷¹⁰ Ticktin 2015.

(i.e., mapping, labelling, governing temporal pasts, and predicting future potentialities) are thereby merged with technologies of power as care in the form of pastoral power (i.e., attempting to minimize exploitation for both the individual and within society). As Michel Foucault reminds us, "...pastoral power is a power of care"⁷¹¹ but that care does not exclude manifestations of control.⁷¹²

7.2 Care portrayed through the image of the Swedish Dream

As the previous section focused on discourses surrounding safeguarding unaccompanied minors and potential (trafficked) missing subjects from vulnerabilities portrayed as occurring *outside* the system, this section will focus on how that system itself is portrayed as something that the asylum-seeking subject is expected to want to stay *within*. Being incorporated into and keeping physically visible within the system when this is asked of one is, according to many interviewees, what provides the asylum-seeker with a safety net, regardless of what decision they have received in their asylum case. As will be examined in this section, a binary opposition is created in which, on the one hand, there is the generous Swedish welfare state where something that I call the "Swedish Dream" is portrayed as possible (the social democratic version of the American Dream); and on the other hand, there is a parallel society: an ungovernable sphere where the missing subject is potentially devoured by dark forces. Yet the notion that an unaccompanied minor would *choose* (rather than be forced by, e.g., human traffickers) to leave the system in order to enter this ungovernable sphere can leave interviewees feeling conflicted. Instead, there is an expectation that unaccompanied minors would *hope* to be a part of this system, which is portrayed as generous.

During one interview with a state employee with a leadership position within the social services, the following was explained:

Interviewer: And just to return to something you said, that social services has a responsibility in preventing that children abscond, establishing a point of reference, a relationship with the children or teenagers, giving them some sort of hope, can you elaborate on what you mean by some sort of hope?

Interviewee: We spoke like this a lot, "Okay, you don't know whether you're going to be allowed to stay in Sweden, it's a difficult process that you're going through. You don't know if you'll be able to get your family here, there's a lot of uncertainty. Make the best of the time that you have here. You're allowed to

⁷¹¹ Foucault 2009, 127.

⁷¹² Johnson et al. 2020, 279.

go to school, you get to live well...you get support, make the best of this time.” That’s giving them hope. “Even if you have to return [*to another country*], you’ve had a good time here in Sweden. You’ve been able to learn a lot from this.” I believe that that’s how we spoke a lot. To still give them hope. We don’t know what your future will be. But not like this, not like “We hope that you get to stay,” but more like, “Make the best of it.”⁷¹³

The Swedish state is thereby portrayed as caring, as it *allows* the unaccompanied minor to go to school, to live well (unspecified what this entails), and to receive support. According to this excerpt, the unaccompanied minor is expected to be hopeful and “make the best of their time here” by actively taking part in the generousities that are on offer. This entails staying physically visible within the system when it is asked of them and having a “good time” (while seeking protection within a state), until it is decided whether the unaccompanied minor can continue to stay *within* the system (i.e., be granted asylum) or will be *expelled* from the system (i.e., be granted a deportation order).

Another interviewee with a leadership position within the social services also spoke of the role of giving unaccompanied minors hope, in order to prevent them from going missing, stating:

I know that we once had a teenager who was really really not doing well and one of the staff members from his accommodation center came with him, and at this point he was very very depressed, actually suicidal. Just then we spoke about this, the rejection [*that he had received in relation to his asylum claims*], and then the staff member said, “You’ve only received two rejections? Then you’ve got one more chance left. You have to look at that.” It was so nice. It becomes like a little little glimmer of hope. And that the teenagers also feel like these are people that know and can follow up...⁷¹⁴

Not only is the unaccompanied minor expected to stay physically visible within the system when it is asked of them, and to partake in a specific type of lifestyle such as that promoted by the first interviewee, but the unaccompanied minor is, according to this excerpt, also expected to trust the system through the appeal process rather than going missing. Again, according to these two interviewees, when it comes to unaccompanied minors, in these instances, state employees attempt to govern missingness by promoting the system itself as a safety net that is to be both appreciated and trusted. Once again, vulnerabilities are indirectly described as something produced elsewhere, rather than produced by the system itself. In a pastoral sense, these social services workers describe their role as defining what hope is and instilling it within the unaccompanied minors. A pastoral power thereby emerges that

⁷¹³ Interview E28.

⁷¹⁴ Interview E05.

“...takes the form of guiding, shaping, leading, [and] conducting humans...”⁷¹⁵

It is through these technologies of pastoral power that we begin to also see manifestations of the Swedish Dream. This implies that as long as the system regards you as belonging to it, it will care and provide for you. For example, one employee at the SMA explained the following when asked why the SMA regards it as important that children do not abscond:

Interviewee: Why it’s important that a child doesn’t abscond?...Because, I believe, that they are already coming from relationships that are horrible as they are...I just think that we should take care of them, specifically children. Like I said, a lot of our BUV [*the Swedish abbreviation for “child without a guardian”*] cases that we had were 80% Afghans. Sexual exploitation, incredibly common. It makes me frustrated. We can’t let a person like that abscond and go and sell their body. That’s happened. There was a person who came to me during our interview about returning [*to another country*] and explained that he had like...yeah, gotten 100 SEK [*Swedish crowns*] an hour, I mean 100 SEK? Do you understand? Like, this is Sweden. It’s impossible to draw the connection. It becomes...no...how the hell can you otherwise integrate them into society? You have to start somewhere, even if they have to leave the country or not. They have to get into a different way of life, get away from sexual exploitation, heroin, and everything else that was in their home country, because if they have to return to their home country, then at least you’ve done something useful. They’ve learned that you can actually live normally, like what we think is normal.

Interviewer: So due to enormous vulnerability?

Interviewee: Yes, they bring something with them I think, which makes them open their eyes, keep fighting to leave [*meaning their home country if they’ve been deported back there*] by other means, and to return to Europe but legally. When you open your eyes, it’s not only about receiving asylum-seekers and making sure that they get residency. You have to do something. School, force them to go to school. You have to learn here, you have to learn the language...then you’ve gotten to learn a new language. How bad can that be?⁷¹⁶

According to this interviewee, unaccompanied minors are to be taken care of, and protected against the vulnerabilities produced *elsewhere*, with elsewhere meaning either an ungovernable parallel society or another country that is not Sweden⁷¹⁷. In Sweden, however, the Swedish Dream is produced – a dream that sells itself as creating a “normal” life for the unaccompanied minor,

⁷¹⁵ Walters 2012, 21.

⁷¹⁶ Interview E24.

⁷¹⁷ It should be noted that the same interviewee also explained in their interview that they sometimes felt that the wrong image of Sweden would be portrayed to the asylum-seekers, i.e. an image of a Sweden where everyone is granted asylum, and that it was thus important to portray things more realistically. See: Interview E24.

thereby continuing to give them hope for the future, regardless of the outcome of their asylum case. McCluskey refers to this type of moral exceptionalism in Sweden as the “governmentality of righteousness,” as it produces a specific type of subjectivity that becomes governable, as refugees are portrayed “...as recipients of the benevolence of the good Swedes...”⁷¹⁸ Missingness is once again governed through a care and control paradox. Technologies of power as care, in the form of pastoral power, describe a system produced as “fundamentally beneficent”⁷¹⁹ for the unaccompanied minor to stay within, while technologies of power as control, in the form of biopower, regulate the inclusion of life within this system, until a conclusion is made as to whether or not this life can continue to be included or will be expelled. According to this logic, the system appears to want to decide *when* the asylum-seeking subject becomes a missing subject (read: missing from Sweden), although, as will be examined later in this chapter, some state employees resist this logic.

7.3 Care portrayed through the image of the maternal social worker

The way in which this system functions, however, does not automatically entail that it is a system devoid of emotions. The system that is portrayed as something that the asylum-seeking subject is expected to want to stay *within* is produced, upheld, and keeps churning through the practices of individual state employees. If the Swedish state is seen as the so-called People’s Home (*folkhem*) or a caring family that provides (i.e., the safeguarder of unaccompanied minors and of the potential (trafficked) missing subject), then by way of analogy state employees, at times, portray themselves as the governing mother within that *folkhem*. As examined in the previous chapter, regarding the governance of missingness in relation to preventing unaccompanied minors from going missing, an emphasis on social relations is found, in which making the unaccompanied minor *feel* visible is meant to *keep* them physically visible. Hence, disappearances can, according to this logic, be hindered through the establishment of relationships that give bureaucracy a “human face,” rather than coercive and disciplinary methods that constrain the physicality of the body.⁷²⁰ “Humanizing” the image of the state and thereby state institutions can portray social relations as an intrinsic part of the bureaucratic machine itself. Some interviewees thereby emphasized these social relations

⁷¹⁸ McCluskey 2019, 23 & 103.

⁷¹⁹ Chamayou 2012, 15.

⁷²⁰ Unless, once again, the unaccompanied minor is detained according to the Care of Young Persons Act (LVU). See: Statens institutions styrelse (SiS) 2016.

by relating to motherhood and its stereotypical gendered associations with nurturing, empathy, concern, and care.

One social worker, for example, whom I interviewed explained that they had an overview of the unaccompanied minors assigned to them at the social services, regardless of whether or not they were registered as missing. When asked to elaborate on what they meant, they explained:

Just like with my own children, you want to have an overview of what they're doing. Also, I have a relationship with my clients of course. You see them very often. Some are eighteen years old and don't have an appointed guardian... You try to solve problems. These are often teenagers with the same problems as all teenagers. I nag like an old mother, and they don't do what I say. It's my responsibility that it works out for them. I can't put that on them, they're too young for that. But we try to make sure it works as well as possible. I like them. They're almost like one's own children, when they call and are angry and yell and scream and have misunderstood. Sometimes we'll have "scream meetings" because we won't reach [*a conclusion*], he'll refuse and I'll refuse. But then, at the next meeting it'll be better and we'll say sorry and move on. It's not as stiff as I can imagine it being at a normal social services unit, because it's not possible to have it that way. We have to be much more relational, I think, because that's all that they have. It's so easy for these boys to end up in the wrong circles. For example, there are so many criminals who recruit these small ones because they're really good to use for selling and buying and so forth, and if they're supposed to stand up against that, they need to have a relationship with someone who says that they shouldn't. They have to feel that they're disappointing someone if they go and join this. That might just be the social services. The same way that you nag at your own kids and want them to succeed, of course these kids should succeed too.⁷²¹

According to this excerpt, it is the social worker's individual responsibility to, like "an old mother," govern the unaccompanied minor through guidance and protection, through individualizing techniques of pastoral power. Meaningful and caring relationships, according to this excerpt entail that the moral obligation of "not disappointing someone" is meant to keep the unaccompanied minor visible, at least in the gaze of the social worker. This logic, once again, is seen as promoting the wellbeing of both individuals and communities.

Another interviewee at the SMA reported that families will sometimes go missing after having received a negative decision on their asylum claims, but will leave one of their children behind for continued processing. This means that the child will be perceived by state institutions as abandoned and will therefore be processed as an unaccompanied minor rather than as part of a family. The interviewee reflected on the situation for children in these types of situations in the following way:

⁷²¹ Interview E11.

[i]t will be okay, anyways, based on if I'm thinking about what the person is doing, where he or her is, is it dangerous...I think along these lines. I don't think beyond the Migration Agency's boundaries, but more like what are you doing? Are you getting food? A little like that. More like in this motherly way, simply someone who cares, a normal person. How are they doing?⁷²²

According to this excerpt, the role of care is thereby “taken over” by the interviewee, at least regarding speculation and concern. Additionally, one interviewee with a leadership position within the social services explained the importance of social workers teaching the unaccompanied minors how to be financially responsible, and stated:

I think, that's what I do with my own children: “you get all of your student loans, you get that, but you have to pay this and that, and I'll pay for this, and you'll pay for that.” I feel like as a public agency, we have to do the same thing with these children...we have to provide them with good conditions, so that they become independent young adults.⁷²³

In the above excerpts, the responsibility for safeguarding unaccompanied minors *within* the system is described as being placed on state employees as individuals. State employees describe their roles as quite pastoral: guiding the unaccompanied minors and providing them with the skills and opportunities to lead safe and healthy lives. The act of describing oneself as a mother or displaying “motherly” attributes in relation to characteristics stereotypically associated with social constructions of femininity or motherhood feed into a feminized depiction of the welfare state. The social relations between unaccompanied minors and social workers, in particular, are portrayed as playing a formative role in the unaccompanied minors' lives. Yet they also risk entrapping the unaccompanied minor in a continuous state of being, despite the unaccompanied minor perhaps already having a family, parents, or meaningful social relationships elsewhere.

In taking on the role of the “mother,” subjectivities deemed to be vulnerable and in need of protection are produced, but “...this move is also cross-cut with the presumption of subjects who are able, or are to be capacitated, to mobilize for themselves.”⁷²⁴ Past relations are substituted with relations that tie the unaccompanied minor to the current system, as not having a legal guardian *here* forms the basis for the production of the specific subject referred to as an *unaccompanied minor*. The idea of the state biopolitically managing the population is reframed through discourses of a mother biopolitically managing a child. As Anne McNevin and Antje Missbach explain in their research on migration and border control, “[o]ur argument should not be taken to suggest that

⁷²² Interview E24.

⁷²³ Interview E27.

⁷²⁴ Walters 2011, 152.

the IOM [*International Organization for Migration*] or other agencies involved in the provision of care to asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants are somehow disingenuous in their efforts to deploy a more humane approach...Rather, we make a more subtle point: humanitarianism has been integrated into the fabric of migration management.”⁷²⁵ In the case of the maternal social worker, control and care are once again intertwined when “...techniques of individualization are incorporated into the governing of a larger population.”⁷²⁶

When interviewed, one social worker explained that social services “...[s]houldn’t let them [*meaning the unaccompanied minors*] go...that’s the only thing that they actually want, they want a relationship to someone and if they have that, it becomes a whole different situation than if they don’t have anyone.”⁷²⁷ Yet what happens if the unaccompanied minor actually goes missing, even though the techniques of individualization are aimed at governing missingness? A few interviewees emphasized the need to physically find them, to bring them back into the sphere of physical visibility in the gaze of state institutions, in this way incorporating them back into the system as an asylum-seeking subject, rather than a missing subject.⁷²⁸ The act of finding the missing unaccompanied minor would often be described through discourses of care, with a constant emphasis on the role of social relations between state employees and unaccompanied minors. This can be contrasted to when adult asylum-seekers go missing, where the emphasis, as examined in Chapter 6, is often put on individual responsibility.⁷²⁹ The system is much less forgiving when adults are involved, as “finding” an adult missing subject most often results in physically detaining them. Thus, four interviewees stated in their interviews that unaccompanied minors *wanted* or *needed* to be found, and therefore needed to *feel* searched for.⁷³⁰

According to one state employee working together with social services to locate unaccompanied minors who have gone missing:

⁷²⁵ McNevin and Missbach. 2018, 29.

⁷²⁶ Walters 2012, 22.

⁷²⁷ Interview E11.

⁷²⁸ Interview E07, E13, and E14.

⁷²⁹ One interviewee, however, who had previously worked at an accommodation center, the SMA, and social services, described both the missingness of unaccompanied minors and adults as “...shameful for Sweden.” They explained that they felt that disappearances were “...a consequence of how we’ve acted. I believe that we’ve been in the wrong. Some person then, it doesn’t matter if it’s a staff member at the accommodation center, the SMA, social services, they haven’t ‘gathered up’ the individual.” Even here, “gathering up” individuals was described through the significance of social relations, as the interviewee explained what they meant: “...we all live in one world and we should all take care of each other. We all have, of course, a responsibility in that if a person comes to this country, they shouldn’t leave or disappear without us knowing why...” See: Interview E10.

⁷³⁰ Interview E07, E11, E13, and E31.

[g]enerally we see a lot of children, regardless of their nationality or group identification, that are missing from somewhere...my colleague once expressed something like, "It's every child's bloody right to be searched for," which I really took to heart and I've tried to take on that fight, that there is a value in searching for a child, regardless of whether they want that or not...there is a value in meeting a child that is missing and saying, "Your social worker or appointed guardian has called us because they are so worried for you and they're really looking for you." It sends a signal, and it is much more valuable to the child when you're able to meet them with that approach.⁷³¹

The interviewee continued and related this to personal reflections:

[y]ou can really only turn to yourself. If I were to go missing and no one was looking for me, that feeling would be one of tremendous loneliness, which I can imagine that many of these children feel in general considering that they're away from their families, if they have any. And there is a value in someone caring enough that they will have someone look for you.⁷³²

The social relations meant to prevent the unaccompanied minor from going missing are the same social relations that are meant to make them "come back" when found. Finding the missing unaccompanied minor, according to this interviewee, is thus equated with caring for them, "...regardless of whether they want that or not..."⁷³³ and regardless of their reason for disappearing in the first place. Even if the unaccompanied minor may have actively gone missing due to vulnerabilities *produced* by the system itself – for example, if they have received a negative decision on their asylum claims – there is still hope in (re)inscribing the individual back into the system as no longer missing, as bi-power strives to manage the population. Thus, the same logic is reproduced in which unaccompanied minors are to be protected from the vulnerabilities occurring outside the system by being physically accessible within the system. Or as one state employee explained, "[w]e're working so that you're always in the system, because that's how you can access resources. We don't view it as positive if you're outside of society's reach."⁷³⁴ Once again, a subject in need of protection is produced, and that protection is provided by state institutions, through the Swedish Dream, (maternal) social relations, and search parties.

The excerpts examined thus continue to augment the way in which the missingness of unaccompanied minors, in particular, can be governed through

⁷³¹ Interview E13.

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

“multi-stranded, tangled social relations and exchanges of care and control,”⁷³⁵ as pastoral power operates through persuasion.⁷³⁶ Technologies of power as control in the form of biopower (i.e., needing to know why someone has left the system, “gathering them up” so that they don’t leave to begin with, or finding them when they are missing), are balanced with technologies of power as care in the form of pastoral power (i.e., promoting wellbeing, although state employees define what this wellbeing is supposed to entail for the asylum-seeking/missing subject), resulting in a “caring biopolitics.” As this section has shown, when the missingness of unaccompanied minors is governed, depending on the state employees involved in the case, the governance of unaccompanied minors does not always end with the governance of conceptual visibility. Physical visibility is prioritized according to the excerpts examined in this section and, therefore, by some state employees. As will be examined in the following section, the bureaucratization of the missing subject is sometimes even *resisted*.

7.4 Resisting the bureaucratization of the missing subject

As examined in Chapter 5 in this thesis, in the asylum regime in Sweden, the missing subject is produced by state institutions to adhere to ordering logics of presence and absence, i.e., subjects are incorporated into the system and thereby managed, or subjects are expelled from the system and thereby no longer managed. Missing subjects are thereby conceptually made present within the system through institutional labelling, despite their physical invisibility, until it is deemed that enough time has passed and their cases are closed. This enables state employees to govern the *idea* of the missing subject, even though the missing subject is actually an ambiguous and unstable subject. In the previous section, however, interviews with social workers, in particular, revealed that, despite opportunities to govern the *idea* of the missing subject, some state employees emphasized the desire to also govern the *physicality* of the missing subject. This is especially the case in relation to unaccompanied minors, as there is an emphasis not only on preventing them from going missing, but also on finding them when they are missing in an effort to physically (re)incorporate them back into the gaze of state institutions. However, as will be examined in this section, the physical (re)incorporation of the missing unaccompanied minor back into the gaze of state institutions is not always the end goal for *all* social workers.

⁷³⁵ Constable 2020, 329.

⁷³⁶ Chamayou 2012, 19-20.

Throughout the interviewing process, I noticed pockets of resistance, on the part of state employees, to the dichotomy of presence and absence as established by ordering logics. Some employees within the social services adopted different techniques of governing missingness that would *embrace* the inbetweenness of missingness, thereby *resisting* dominant logics of bureaucracy. This would entail utilizing social relations with the unaccompanied minor as a mode of resistance to an asylum regime rooted in a rigid legal framework. As explained by some interviewees, it was not unheard of that an unaccompanied minor could be registered as absconding in the eyes of one authority, while another authority would know where the unaccompanied minor was physically located, despite this registered status. For example, in certain interviews with employees at the social services, social workers expressed that it was not unusual for them to keep in touch with missing children,⁷³⁷ despite often having no formal responsibility, bureaucratically speaking for the child once the case had been closed due to prolonged missingness.⁷³⁸

As one social worker described:

[w]e have a legal framework, but you can be pretty flexible within it. It's clear that you close the case after this and that amount of time and after that we're not supposed to get involved in the case anymore. In principle, we're not supposed to do more than what the law dictates, but of course you can't do that when it comes to a 16-year-old. You need to know what's happened, if he's alive, why he went missing.⁷³⁹

Knowing what happened could be achieved through practices such as persistently and actively looking for the unaccompanied minor on social media. The same social worker explained, “[i]t's like this, Facebook is, well...yes, it's where you can find out if they're still alive and that”⁷⁴⁰, here equating absence from the system with the possibility of death. They continued by describing the following:

I was at a lecture held by the county administration a couple of weeks ago, about just this: missing and that. Then I also thought, “What? No one really goes missing like that.” You still have some sort of overview of almost everyone, even the one who returned [*to a different country*] or the one who returned to Afghanistan. I know where almost everyone, not everyone, but almost everyone, my old or previous boys, where they live, and the girls too. So, yeah, you keep in touch somehow. They have my number and they've kept it, and they'll call me if something's up...⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁷ Interview E03, E05, E08, E11, and E28.

⁷³⁸ Interview E05.

⁷³⁹ Interview E11.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

In these two excerpts, validation that the unaccompanied minor is alive appears to be more important than (re)incorporating them back into the system. In this sense, the unaccompanied minor is, despite being missing, still governed through technologies of biopower, as individual social workers are still able to “have an overview” and map mobilities, either by reaching out to the unaccompanied minors, or by the unaccompanied minors self-governing and self-reporting their whereabouts and state of being to their social worker.

Another social worker echoed a similar sentiment, explaining that they are often not worried, as unaccompanied minors who disappear within Sweden will always end up getting in touch again, especially when they are in need of help.⁷⁴² In relation to whether their unit uses terms such as absconded or disappeared in their daily activities, this social worker explained:

...[w]e use the term absconded. I believe that it's more...I mean, children that go missing, that's a pretty strong concept. They are children that go missing, but at the same time, they are in a system...I get children, or teenagers and children, that have received a rejection [*on their asylum claims*], so they go to Italy and they'll call me, but in our system they're registered as absconded. But they'll call me on Viber on my work phone and say, “We just want to let you know that we're doing well.” Even though they're absconding, I know that they're often going to make it, because if you've fled from Afghanistan, then you can't be missing in Sweden. That's what I believe, that's my personal opinion.⁷⁴³

Consequently, individual social workers may sometimes allow for the in-betweenness of missingness to exist, as the physical whereabouts of unaccompanied minors are at times known by social workers, regardless of whether they are registered within the system as absconding or have had their cases closed due to prolonged missingness. Knowing whether or not the unaccompanied minor is alive when social workers are no longer meant to have an interest in that particular life can lead to technologies of biopower that push the boundaries of that legal framework. Resistance can thereby be found to what is “expected” of the social worker within the legal framework, as they are “... not supposed to do more than what the law dictates...”⁷⁴⁴ At the same time, when missing unaccompanied minors check in with social workers to self-govern and report in their own physical whereabouts despite formal responsibility having ended, this could reflect the establishment of social relations between pastoral social workers and unaccompanied minors.

⁷⁴² Interview E03; Please note that this was also reiterated by another social worker, who stated that there is often a reason for unaccompanied minors getting in touch with social workers again, for example, if they have disappeared to another country and want to return to Sweden. See: Interview E31.

⁷⁴³ Interview E03.

⁷⁴⁴ Interview E11.

In addition to embracing the inbetweenness of missingness, there were also instances described in interviews in which social workers expressed resistance to the SMA in particular. In an interview with an employee with a leadership position at the social services, the interviewee disagreed with the notion that social workers should provide unaccompanied minors with “glimmers of hope.” The interviewee found that providing hope to the unaccompanied minors would mean that social workers would often end up resisting negative decisions enforced by the SMA. The interviewee stated that this was common at many units within the social services and explained the following: “...I see social workers that want to protect the teenagers, and sometimes they want to help them by explaining what they should do so they get a more favorable decision...The social worker will actively go in with the presumption that ‘this is my teenager’...that’s not good either.”⁷⁴⁵ Two interviewees highlighted that there was an underlying tension between some social workers and the SMA as an institution, as they delegitimized the decisions enforced by the SMA and expressed sympathy with those who go missing after having received a negative decision.⁷⁴⁶ This tension was reinforced by an interviewee working at the Return Unit at the SMA, who stated: “[s]ocial services...they always come across as pretty skeptical to what we’re working with.”⁷⁴⁷

One social worker explained that, depending on what type of relationship they have with the unaccompanied minor, the unaccompanied minor sometimes informs them when they have decided to go missing. In the interview room, the following was said about unaccompanied minors who go missing in Sweden so that they can seek asylum elsewhere:

Social worker 1: I mean, the only experience that I have so to speak, is of those that have left to seek asylum somewhere else, and then the feeling is like: hope that it works.

Social worker 2: Same here. Of course it’s awkward, but if you have the information and have received it and know that the teenager is going to apply somewhere else rather than go missing, instead of no one knowing about anything, there’s a difference.

Head of the social services unit: There are some teenagers that wish to travel through, Sweden has been a transit country, more or less...

Social worker 1 or 2: Oh yeah.

Head of the social services unit: And then they’ve expressed, “But I’m going to carry on to there” or “I have relatives in Canada or Finland,” or all of that, then there’s more of an understanding from our part that when they’re gone, there’s at least a small chance that yes, they’ve continued on their way.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁵ Interview E06.

⁷⁴⁶ Interview E27 and E28.

⁷⁴⁷ Interview E30.

⁷⁴⁸ Interview E05.

The head of this social services unit explained in the same interview that they want the unaccompanied minor to inform someone before they disappear:

[B]ut that's very difficult to say to a 15-year-old who lives with a family [*meaning an appointed family*] that they hopefully respect and like and don't want to hurt in any way. But in most cases, they leave during the night, creeping away...I tried to get the teenagers to understand that they can even ask for money. "Instead, ask the parents at your temporary home for help with train tickets and that." Drive them to the train instead of having them walk along the highway. But it's very difficult to actually get this to happen in practice, because the teenagers don't want to be held accountable, they don't want to have to explain themselves and hear adults say, "But should you really go missing now? There might still be a chance." They've already made their decision and they go missing when they want to.⁷⁴⁹

By expressing feelings of hope that unaccompanied minors who go missing will receive asylum elsewhere,⁷⁵⁰ or by encouraging others to facilitate the actual act of going missing, the idea of Sweden as a protector of unaccompanied minors, and a preventer of disappearances, is inevitably disrupted. These excerpts indirectly resist the idea of the "Swedish Dream," as sympathy is expressed with the notion that unaccompanied minors may go missing to seek asylum elsewhere. As one interviewee who had worked for both the SMA and social services stated in relation to negative decisions being enforced by the SMA, "...it comes down to an individual assessment, and that means that two people have made a decision, based on practices and country information and all that, that he doesn't have any asylum claims. But that doesn't mean that it's true just because they've made that assessment. And if a person then chooses to live in hiding for four years rather than return [*to another country*], that says a whole lot about that assessment."⁷⁵¹ According to this excerpt, the asylum-seeker is framed as knowing what has to be done in the best interest of their own life, rather than what is often portrayed as the asylum regime knowing. Or in the words of another social worker, "[i]t's not like he absconded from a crime scene or because he wanted to get away with something...these are people that have no other choice than to go missing...they're

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ In the same interview, social workers reported that they sometimes keep in touch with those who have disappeared and applied for asylum in another EU country, in order to hear how it went for them with their new asylum cases, and to be able to pass this information on to other unaccompanied minors who have received negative decisions and are wondering what they should do (see: Interview E05). Another interviewee with a leadership position within the social services reported, however that their group of social workers would often discuss the importance of not giving advice about what the unaccompanied minor should do regarding leaving the country after having received a negative decision (see: Interview E28).

⁷⁵¹ Interview E10.

not even adults...they're teenagers, young adults, that we just let...abscond."⁷⁵²

According to some interviewees, state employees may thereby view (and even support) missingness as a form of resistance to a (de)legitimate asylum regime that leaves asylum-seekers with few options after receiving a negative decision from the SMA⁷⁵³. In these instances, vulnerabilities are (in)directly described as being produced by the system *itself*, in contrast to the commonly portrayed perspective in interviews: that vulnerabilities are produced *elsewhere*. According to this logic, missingness is something that occurs when the asylum-seeker has to protect themselves *from* the system, as they are not protected *by* the system. Thus, an employee with a leadership position within the social services explained that social workers can, at times, resign from their positions as a form of protest, when they feel that asylum-seekers are not being protected by the system. At this unit in particular, for example, many social workers resigned when they believed that budget cuts directly affected unaccompanied minors in a way that gave them lower economic status as compared to children with Swedish citizenship.⁷⁵⁴

Regardless of what the actual practices of resistance look like, this section shows that governing missingness can be, for state employees, a conflicting experience. We find techniques of “caring biopolitics,” as caring for unaccompanied minors is described as occurring (in)formally outside the system and regardless of their registered statuses. Managing life in this sense becomes an informal endeavor, operating both within and outside the system itself, pursued by individual social workers. Once again, however, state employees are pressured to call the shots when it comes to determining whether someone is present or absent within the system, leading some to resist this pressure by allowing the missing subject to just simply be: missing. The missing subject appears to be, in practice, both unstable and ambiguous, while missingness, consequently, is difficult to govern.

7.5 Relating to the idea of the missing subject

As the inbetweenness of missingness can be challenging for state employees to govern, some interviewees reflected on the notion of going missing itself and their own role within the system. These reflections were often produced in relation to their role not only as state employees, but also as individuals with emotional lives irrespective of their professional work title. Empathy for the missing subject (both adults and unaccompanied minors) was commonly

⁷⁵² Interview E11.

⁷⁵³ Interview E05, E06, E10, E11, E27, and E28.

⁷⁵⁴ Interview E27.

framed through discourses of care rather than control, as attempts were regularly made to relate to the “choice” of going missing. Six interviewees, for example, expressed that had they found themselves in a similar situation and received a negative decision on their asylum claims, they would also most likely go missing.⁷⁵⁵ As Eeva Puumala states in her research on the asylum-seeking process and sovereignty as a dynamic practice rather than a monolithic construction, “[e]ven though individual officers can in their daily work adopt practices that disrupt sovereign imaginaries, they cannot escape their position as representatives of the state.”⁷⁵⁶ Not only is the asylum-seeking/missing subject produced in relation to the state employee, but the state employee is, of course, also produced in relation to the asylum-seeking/missing subject. Thus, this section will examine the role of the state employee and their emotions in relation to the idea of the missing subject.

In her research on the SMA, Åsa Wettergren labels the emotional regime of the SMA as “procedural correctness.” This regime “...celebrates democratic and humanitarian values and individual rights...It offers the ideal identity position of the kind, self-confident and proud professional whose duty it is to execute legislation ‘in the best way possible’ as a service to the customer/applicant. As such, procedural correctness is a fantasy of impossible perfect correspondence between the law and reality...”⁷⁵⁷ Two state employees interviewed for this thesis explained that they often observed a high standard of professionalism (i.e., procedural correctness) at the SMA. This professionalism meant: representing the Swedish state, regulating immigration, treating asylum-seekers with respect by providing a good service, and representing democracy.⁷⁵⁸ One of these interviewees, who has previously been employed at the SMA, explained:

[w]e are a state institution, the extended arm of our representatives that we have voted into government, and we have to act thereafter. It is part of our democratic values, to act right and humanely and if you have those [values], then there shouldn't be any problems. And if you lack any of them, then you're not the extended arm of the government, in my opinion. You're not a real civil servant. Because it's part of our value system as civil servants to be objective, neutral...to implement the law...yeah, to be well-read, it's extremely important.⁷⁵⁹

Thus, there appears to be a disciplinary power operating through (in)formal discourses at the SMA, in which state employees are schooled into what it means to be a “real” civil servant: i.e., one who is objective, neutral, and im-

⁷⁵⁵ Interview E10, E16, E17, E20, E21, and E22.

⁷⁵⁶ Puumala 2017, 69.

⁷⁵⁷ Wettergren 2010, 414.

⁷⁵⁸ Interview E09 and E21.

⁷⁵⁹ Interview E21.

plements the law, through democratic, just, and humane values. The interviewee continued to explain that although some employees may accept certain values more than others, “we are not machines, we are people who sit and make decisions in cases that can determine another person’s fate.”⁷⁶⁰ As commonsensical as it may first appear, this quote reminds us that, despite disciplinary (and regulatory) discourses stipulating what the state employee is *supposed* to be, the system is not a machine, but is rather produced, upheld, and performed by human beings. According to Wettergren, emotions were solely encouraged as a “...display of courtesy to the applicants...” at the department where she conducted her research at the SMA. However, despite this, “...emotions permeated the activities at the department.”⁷⁶¹

State employees interviewed for this thesis would at times describe a tension between the perceived role of the civil servant and one’s *personal* responsibility within the system, as they could still feel powerless despite formally having power over others. One interviewee in particular described feeling an incredible sense of responsibility when it came to working at the SMA, but felt powerless when they left that position in order to work at the social services instead. When reflecting on their previous employment at the SMA, they explained:

I thought a lot about Hannah Arendt there, and the SS officers who would just say: “I was only doing my job, I was only following orders from above” and that is a very natural psychological process that is very human, that I hope that everyone can, or at least I *hope* that they can...I mean I think that it’s that way at least...but that everyone can feel and understand that feeling. That you get deprived of responsibility. This personal responsibility of blaming a system, a state apparatus, a job, a boss, that’s what I thought was the hardest...knowing that I have a personal responsibility but that sometimes that’s not enough. It doesn’t even matter.⁷⁶²

In this excerpt, the interviewee describes the complexity of feeling powerless regarding one’s role within the system and how it is constructed. As Wettergren’s research at the SMA found, “[t]he officers [*meaning caseworkers*] could defend their duty to *follow* the law, but they needed not *defend* the law.”⁷⁶³ Or as Roland Paulsen discovers through his ethnographic research at the Swedish Public Employment Service, even when we “obey” orders, we still choose *how* to obey. According to Paulsen, the more an employee is financially independent from their job, the more personal responsibility they have for what they expose others to through their work role.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Wettergren 2010, 414.

⁷⁶² Interview E10.

⁷⁶³ Wettergren 2010, 407.

⁷⁶⁴ Paulsen 2015, 136 & 145-146.

Yet as the interview with this interviewee in particular continued, they answered the following when asked what, in their opinion, was the difference between personal responsibility and civil servant responsibility:

There is a huge difference. Civil servant responsibility: you're supposed to do an objective assessment. It's very easy to be a civil servant if you diverge from the personal, morals and ethics. If you're only a civil servant, there are very clear guidelines for how you're supposed to be, how you're supposed to act, what you're supposed to take your point of departure from. So it's not that difficult if you're only supposed to complete a task and disassociate from feelings, morals, and ethics. But that's what was difficult, and that's what makes it difficult. But I think that's also the reason why the civil servant role is stripped so bare, because you're supposed to make it easy for people to perform the role of the civil servant and give them less room to make their own interpretations and such.⁷⁶⁵

According to the excerpts above, personal responsibility is moralistic, ethical, and emotive, while civil servant responsibility is objective, neutral, emotionless, and performative. However, when examining how missingness is governed, the two roles are not always easily distinguishable, regardless of technologies of disciplinary and regulatory powers that (in)formally attempt to separate them. Humans "...are made up of an assortment of contrasting and changing identities, subjectivities and emotive states of being,"⁷⁶⁶ thereby making a clear demarcation difficult in practice.

This complexity was especially present when state employees who play a role in enforcing asylum legislation that could inevitably cause someone to go missing were simultaneously sympathetic with the reasons *why* someone might go missing. As one interviewee at the Asylum Unit explained:

[y]ou automatically know that if you decide on a negative decision, that this person, he or she, is going to stand at a crossroads and have to decide: what do I do now? We all know that there are an x number of alternatives. One alternative is to "go underground," one is to try their luck elsewhere and maybe the third alternative is to return to their home country. And...you think, if they've come all this way, depending on where they've come from and how, then in many cases it is a very difficult process, expensive, it takes a lot out of you physically and mentally, and then you might not want to return because it's like starting all over again. The truth is that we know that this person has made a decision...that they have a goal here. With a negative decision, the dream doesn't disappear, but the chance does for four years.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁵ Interview E10.

⁷⁶⁶ Smith 2009, 144.

⁷⁶⁷ Interview E20.

Although the interviewee in the excerpt above contributes to the governance of asylum-seekers and is inevitably expected to obey asylum legislation, including enforcing negative decisions, they simultaneously express sympathy for the “dream” of a new life, and the difficult journey behind that dream (again: the idea that fleeing a country is equivalent to chasing a dream can and should, of course, be debated). Additionally, the harsh lived realities of missingness will sometimes lead interviewees to speculate as to the wellbeing of those who go missing. For example, one interviewee working with asylum claims at the SMA explained that there is not much the SMA can do when someone is presumed missing. However, assuming that the disappearance was a “choice” means that “...maybe it’s a bit easier to live with. But in other cases, it can be a little like, ‘what’s happening with them?’ It’s kind of like that with casework in general. Everyone needs to find their way to deal with the people that we meet, and what we take with us, particularly.”⁷⁶⁸

Another interviewee working with the return process at the SMA described that they often think about those who have disappeared and what they are doing:

[s]ome are completely under the radar, and when the case expires, they show up again and have been here for four years somehow, and then, you wonder...like...what their life situation looks like. For some, maybe it’s alright. They might have a very good social network, employment is rarely a problem. And what ---- [name of co-worker] said, some within this group get exploited utterly horribly, but not everyone does. And there probably exists, hopefully, a substantial group that have, despite being undocumented, have lived a relatively normal life. And I know, anecdotally, families that have children...small children...that the municipality has allowed to go to school, daycare, no problem, and have maybe been protected against more of the, what should I call it...tough side of not having permission to be here. Everyday life carries on, and one might meet them again and not see any indication of anything negative with the family...present parents, healthy children, and they might have been in Sweden for six or seven years, speak fluent Swedish...So one hopes that there are very many that are in that [kind of] situation, while at the same time, that’s not the way it is. It’s not unrecorded, but there’s a lot of ignorance, like you don’t know what happens during this period when they are formally undocumented.⁷⁶⁹

Discourses of care produced by state employees through expressions of empathy and sympathy and a pastoral concern for the wellbeing of the missing subject contribute to the ongoing tension found between the state as the protector against vulnerabilities versus the state as the creator of those vulnerabilities to begin with. The interviewee in the excerpt above expresses notions

⁷⁶⁸ Interview E22.

⁷⁶⁹ Interview E16.

of care in the form of well wishes, but the vulnerabilities associated with missingness are disassociated from the asylum regime as a whole.⁷⁷⁰ Once again, according to this logic, vulnerabilities exist elsewhere rather than being produced by the system itself. Nevertheless, the uncertainty of missingness is speculated about, as its individual lived experiences are difficult for the state institution to map. Moreover, an *overall* interest in mapping these experiences might not exist. Missingness as the ultimate manifestation of the unknown can either ignite the imaginations of SMA caseworkers or, as the interviewee working with asylum claims explained, remind state employees to let go of what can no longer be managed.⁷⁷¹ Regardless, by examining the governance of missingness and the tension that arises when examining vulnerabilities and responsibilities, we find “multi-stranded, tangled social relations and exchanges of care and control.”⁷⁷²

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter continued to examine how missingness and governance relate to each other, but this time through *different technologies of power as care*. This chapter found that, in addition to the technologies of disciplinary power and biopower examined in Chapter 6, missingness is also governed through technologies of pastoral power, as well as technologies of biopower that are often framed as “caring.” Although discourses of care were often reproduced in interviews, there appears to be no single way of governing missingness, both externally between the SMA and social services, but also within these institutions, confirming that state employees do indeed struggle to control and manage the uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of missingness. It should be noted that this chapter does not mean to insinuate that state employees who expressed care and empathy in relation to missing subjects in their interviews were in any way disingenuous in their demeanor. However, as this chapter has shown, technologies of power as care can be difficult to disentangle from technologies of power as control, as we find “multi-stranded, tangled social relations and exchanges of care and control.”⁷⁷³ This is especially true when it comes to unaccompanied minors, as having an “overview” of them is often framed as looking out for their wellbeing.

Unaccompanied minors (and those seen as at risk of being trafficked) are often portrayed as being in need of protection by state employees, as vulnera-

⁷⁷⁰ In addition to Interview E16, see: Interview E21

⁷⁷¹ Interview E22.

⁷⁷² Johnson and Lindquist 2020, 195.

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

bilities are portrayed as existing outside the system in an ungovernable “parallel society,” rather than being produced by the asylum regime itself. As unaccompanied minors are seen as protected as long as they are present within the system (i.e., physically visible within the system when deemed relevant), state employees can be found attempting to prevent missingness from occurring in the first place. Although as examined in the Chapter 6, this does not apply to *all* children, as those who are pre-determined as missing are “allowed” to be missing. This chapter has shown, however, that ordering logics entail that if the unaccompanied minor is made to *feel* visible within the gaze of state employees, they will *remain* visible. Hence, unaccompanied minors are, at times, biopolitically governed through social workers performing the role of the “maternal mother”: a subject who cares for the child labeled as parentless, as if it were their own. In the interviews conducted for this thesis, social workers in particular emphasized the role of establishing meaningful social relations with the unaccompanied minors, such as a mother-child relationship, in an effort either to prevent them from going missing to begin with or to help convince them to be (re)incorporated into the gaze of state institutions if they are found when missing.

The Swedish state, and thereby state institutions, are portrayed as generous, caring, and protective. Thus, staying within the system (until the system deems that you no longer belong to it) is seen as being in the unaccompanied minor’s best interest. Yet as examined in this chapter, governing logics dictating that one must either be present or absent within the system were sometimes resisted by the interviewees. In these instances, missingness as an inbetweenness was embraced, as these social workers expressed that they sometimes kept in touch with unaccompanied minors who were registered as absconding or whose cases had been closed due to prolonged missingness. Missingness was often viewed by these social workers as an act of resistance to the SMA and an asylum regime portrayed as illegitimate. The missing unaccompanied minor was indeed still governed, but this governance would occur outside the formal system in which governance is “expected” to occur. The tension of state employees both being part of the system itself and (in)directly questioning its logics was also found in the ways that both employees at the SMA and at the social services related to the idea of the missing subject. Those who were expected to prevent the asylum-seeking subject from becoming a missing subject could also play a role in enforcing asylum legislation that could inevitably lead to disappearances. State employees could thereby be found simultaneously expressing sympathy for the reasons why someone might go missing, confirming the complexities that arise when these employees attempt to navigate how to govern missingness.

8. Conclusion

My interest in what missingness has the potential to tell us about the functioning of the (often portrayed as) well-oiled machinery that is the asylum regime began when I was an employee at the SMA. I witnessed and partook in reinforcing governing logics that, in my eyes and at that time, encouraged one to address missingness in a strictly bureaucratic manner. When someone was assumed to be missing, calls were to be made, boxes ticked, statuses changed, and cases closed. The faces of those currently missing, if included in the case file, were a reminder of a human life temporally and spatially belonging to the past, and a system attempting to manage how their case will temporally and spatially belong in the future. This experience became the catalyst for what would later become this doctoral thesis and the paradox that I continuously saw unfolding. On the one hand, the Swedish asylum regime is composed of a system of bureaucracy that functions through ordering logics of presence and absence, regulating whether or not you are managed. These ordering logics therefore crave, seek out, produce, and need secure subjects who fit into neat categories of management. On the other hand, the Swedish system has also attempted to “gain control” over the asylum-seeking context, by enforcing more restrictive asylum policies and practices, while admitting that this will increasingly lead to more disappearances. The same system that is expected to govern those seeking asylum is, thus, paradoxically at risk of pushing asylum-seekers into a sphere of missingness, of invisibility, in which they become more difficult to govern.

This confused me and has thereby inspired me to, in this thesis, examine the *governance* of missingness within the asylum-seeking regime. By interviewing state employees who manage the asylum-seeking process and are employed to administer lives within this process, I have examined in what ways missingness challenges logics of governance, as asylum-seekers who are subjected to the asylum-seeking regime may and do disappear. Rather than focusing on the missing subject as such, and their reasons for disappearing, I have been interested in using the state that missingness can entail (i.e., not knowing whether the missing person is alive nor dead, where they are, and what has happened to them, and hence what to do next) to examine what this in-betweenness means for governing logics, and what forms of governance become visible when these governing logics are forced to confront missingness head-on. Henceforth, this conclusion will summarize the overall answers to the

questions that this thesis has tried to examine: how is missingness governed within the Swedish asylum regime, and what does this tell us about different technologies of power involved in the governance of migration? Before offering some final remarks, I will discuss my four main findings: how the missing subject is made conceptually visible, how missingness is governed through technologies of power as control, how missingness is created and facilitated, and how missingness is governed through technologies of power as care.

8.1 Making the missing subject conceptually visible

How is missingness governed within the Swedish asylum regime? To understand how missingness is governed, I have had to begin by understanding how the missing subject is produced. In previous research, the missing subject has often been equated with death, in particular those who have died at the sites of different border landscapes. Yet for the Swedish state employees interviewed in this thesis, the missing subject is rarely considered to be a deceased subject (in actuality, not symbolically). Those who are missing are instead, for some reason, out there, somewhere, or as one interviewee at the SMA stated, "...we usually think, they're here somewhere, they're just not available to us."⁷⁷⁴ State employees are assigned the responsibility of deciding when someone is indeed considered missing, or when someone is seen as being at risk of going missing, basically: when the asylum-seeking subject formally becomes, or may become, the missing subject instead. State employees are not trained to deal with the actuality of the ambiguity of missingness, but as power is productive,⁷⁷⁵ the missing subject is produced through the demarcation of categories such as *absconding* and *missing*. This is especially the case when it comes to unaccompanied minors, as guidelines developed by the Stockholm County Administrative Board have attempted to introduce a temporal aspect, in which one can be defined as missing if they have been absconding for more than three months.⁷⁷⁶

At first glance, temporal definitions such as these enact a bureaucratic mirage of control over the unknown, hiding the messiness and ambiguity that missingness itself actually entails, as has later been uncovered in this thesis. Michel Foucault's work reminds us of, "...the productive power of discourse and how power targets bodies to produce subjects."⁷⁷⁷ Yet what becomes interesting in the case of missingness is that there is no physical body to directly target: the physicality of the body is, well, missing. The missing subject is thus

⁷⁷⁴ Interview E30.

⁷⁷⁵ Edkins 1999, 52-54.

⁷⁷⁶ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2017a, 18.

⁷⁷⁷ Wilcox 2015, 37

produced and targeted through categorization within the system. These administrative procedures can then, in turn, have consequences for the lived realities and physical bodies of the missing. As a result, by transforming the asylum-seeking subject into the missing subject (and/or absconding subject, to use bureaucratic terms) within the system, exclusionary practices are enacted. One is no longer viewed as an active asylum-seeker and, thus, one's rights as an asylum-seeker, such as the right to economic assistance, are taken away by the SMA. Echoing the argument put forth by Grégorie Chamayou, modern proscription is "...carried out through administrative procedures. Its mechanics are bureaucratic and its instruments consist of paper. Modern states have concentrated in their hands the monopoly on the means of certifying personal existence."⁷⁷⁸

This thesis has shown that, by bureaucratizing the missing subject and certifying their personal existence as absconding, the missing subject is made *conceptually visible*. Using the term absconding means that the individual is still incorporated into the system, case-wise. As has been shown, registering someone as absconding at the SMA can sometimes even benefit employees at the SMA, as closing the missing subject's case can subsequently improve the employee's statistics in terms of how many decisions in asylum cases they have made that year. This leads me to one of the main findings in this thesis: when the missing subject is made *conceptually visible* as absconding, despite being *physically invisible* (at least in the gaze of state institutions), the idea of the missing subject becomes easier to govern, even though the actual missing subject is nowhere to be found. Within the SMA, the code absconding becomes manageable, rather than the physicality of the individual. The paradox of being conceptually visible, but physically invisible, can be paralleled to a humorously absurd historical example: in the 17th century, a symbolic execution could be authorized if a condemned man was not physically present. A picture of the man would be killed instead. In the words of Esprit Fléchier, "[i]t was fine to see, on the square where executions took place, so many pictures displayed in each of which an executioner cut off a head...[T]he whole people came out of curiosity to see this crowd of painted criminals who constantly died and did not die at all..."⁷⁷⁹ For the contemporary missing subject, their asylum case will also eventually be symbolically executed and expelled by the SMA, without the physical presence of the subject in question.

The prioritization of this conceptual visibility over physical visibility is, to a certain extent, ingrained in the practices of the Swedish asylum regime from the first day one applies for asylum. When an individual who applies for asylum becomes an asylum-seeking subject at the beginning of the asylum pro-

⁷⁷⁸ Chamayou 2012, 136.

⁷⁷⁹ Fléchier quoted in Chamayou 2012, 25.

cess, their photographs and fingerprints are taken, hence their identity is digitalized and “bureaucratically captured.”⁷⁸⁰ In my interviews with employees at the SMA, I found that regarding adult asylum-seekers, the physical whereabouts of the asylum-seeker beyond their digital identity are not necessarily of importance thereafter, as long as the asylum-seeker makes themselves physically visible when beckoned into a sphere of physical visibility. This beckoning into a sphere of physical visibility aligns with the logics of the state as presented in previous research on state security, as “[t]he state can only protect or secure a stable form. Bodies that are not self-contained and individuated are more difficult to contain...subjects can only be integrated into the state as long as they are individualized...Security is thus about securing bodies inside the state, as well as those outside.”⁷⁸¹ However in the case of missing adult asylum-seekers in particular, it is when they do not answer this call to physical visibility that they become this new manageable logic to be incorporated into the system (i.e. the governable category of absconding).

As reflected in their internal routines, state employees at the SMA in particular are not *expected* to dwell in the inbetweenness of missingness: the subject is either present in the system or absent from the system. However, this thesis has included fragments of interviews with employees at the SMA that have pinpointed moments of disruption. In these moments, governing logics that have produced the missing subject as conceptually visible have been disrupted, as the missing subject has physically reappeared in the bureaucratic corridors of management. This has entailed moments in which the binary construction of being conceptually visible and simultaneously physically invisible has been contested, as the messiness of the social world has revealed itself. As Edkins reminds us, “...missing persons disturb; their ambiguity derange not only those who search for them, but also those who seek to impose administrative or political classifications or categorizations.”⁷⁸² It is through moments such as these, as outlined in Chapter 5, that it becomes clear that governing the idea of the missing subject through neat categories of management is easier to deal with for state employees, specifically at the SMA, than is governing the actual missing subject. This opens the door to many interesting future research endeavors, including what the notion of life means (e.g., when it is apprehended and when it is recognized) for biopolitical systems traditionally organized around its management, such as asylum regimes. As technologies of biopower, in particular, play a role in making visible that which is invisible, i.e., producing the missing subject as conceptually visible through labelling and bureaucratic categorization, I have, in this thesis, found a tension in how the missing subject is *portrayed* as governed versus how missingness is *actu-*

⁷⁸⁰ Humphris and Sigona 2019, 1505.

⁷⁸¹ Wilcox 2015, 86.

⁷⁸² Edkins 2011, 13.

ally governed. As has been shown, the missing subject is produced and portrayed as something that is known and at least bureaucratically controllable. Within the system, the missing subject will eventually come to an end, irrespective of the physicality of the individual, as time elapses and cases are closed and/or handed over to the police.

8.2 Governing missingness through technologies of power as control

Compared to the bureaucratization of the missing subject, the *actuality* of how missingness is governed reflects the messiness of the social world. This thesis finds that missingness is governed both through a multitude of responses and an interplay of different technologies of power. These technologies of power appear to be operating simultaneously, sometimes in contradiction to one another, and sometimes irrespective of one another, offering no *overall clear-cut answer* as to how missingness is governed, besides that it can be, at times, *a mess*. This has not deterred me, however, from trying to examine how missingness and logics of governance continuously relate to one another, as there appear to be pockets of organized chaos within the mess. Missingness is, of course, governed, it is just governed in many different ways by many different people. State employees differ in their struggles and attempts to grasp missingness within a system that portrays the missing subject as bureaucratically graspable. The ambiguities, complexities, tensions, discomfort, and disruptions found within this intersection of missingness and governance serve as further verification for why I found it necessary to engage with the discourses of state employees, as opposed to treating the state as a self-existing entity and its official formal discourses as a representation of everyday truths. As a result of the interviews with state employees for this thesis, the remainder of this conclusion will summarize the main findings regarding how missingness is governed through more traditional technologies of power as control, how missingness is facilitated by the state, thereby contradicting these traditional technologies of power as control, and how missingness is governed through technologies of power as care, which are at times inseparable from technologies of power as control.

Looking back at the interviewing process of this thesis, I recall being surprised at how, according to my interviewees, technologies of power as control appeared to operate in relation to the governance of missingness. As outlined in the preface of this thesis, when I was employed at the SMA, there appeared to be no coercive practices of control with regard to figuring out where the missing subject was. I was simply meant to register them as absconding and eventually close the case, disassociating myself from the consequences that

this might have for their lived realities. While writing this thesis, I remember assuming that my own experience had only been one puzzle piece in the narrative of the governance of missingness. Asylum regimes across the globe were increasingly cracking down on migration, as demonstrated, for example, by the release of Behrouz Boochani's autobiographical memoir of his (then current) detainment on Manus Island,⁷⁸³ or the images of distraught refugee children separated from their families and put in cages in ICE facilities across the United States.⁷⁸⁴ In a climate where the politics of migration mobility appeared to be increasingly securitized, I went into the interviewing process wearing a backpack full of critical literature that spoke of the biopolitics of state control over migrant bodies, thus assuming that the governance of missingness had also been, to a certain extent, increasingly securitized.

The aspects of control that I found were, however, different from what I had expected. In addition to the mirage of bureaucratic control over the missing subject through labelling and categorization, there were indeed instances in which state employees expressed their concerns over the physical invisibility of the missing subject. Physical visibility, irrespective of conceptual visibility, did at times matter, in particular before potentially going missing and if one had gone missing and was assumed to potentially go missing again. A few state employees interviewed in this thesis took pride in the fact that Swedish concerns over how to control the physical bodies of asylum-seekers appeared to be more lenient than the practices of control found within asylum regimes in Australia and/or the United States.⁷⁸⁵ Besides the detention center (an epicenter of disciplinary and biopolitical control), it was, at first glance, difficult to see technologies of power as control operating like they were traditionally portrayed in the CMS literature: coercive practices over the physical body. Throughout history, those who would defy legislation and disappear presented "...a political danger: revealing to everyone the state's relative impotence."⁷⁸⁶ Yet in the case of missing asylum-seekers in Sweden, concerns with the physicality of the missing subject through technologies of power, such as biopower and/or disciplinary power, were mainly found hidden in discourses emphasizing the need to prevent, through surveillance practices at the accommodation centers, unaccompanied minors from becoming missing subjects, regulating access to information for asylum-seekers in order to prevent missingness, and discourses emphasizing the need to keep visible, through detainment, adult asylum-seekers who had previously been missing.

Where biopower and disciplinary power were found operating, missingness was governed through ideas of visibility. This is not a new finding, as Martina Tazzioli and William Walters state, "...it could be argued that visibility is the

⁷⁸³ Boochani 2019.

⁷⁸⁴ See, e.g.: Pilkington 2020.

⁷⁸⁵ Interview E20, E21, and E30.

⁷⁸⁶ Chamayou 2012, 95.

core of governmentality.”⁷⁸⁷ Making individuals visible through different technologies of power does not only mean “...putting bodies under a surveilling gaze. Actually, it is more on the side of making reality knowable that visibility works in modern governmentality, as Foucault indirectly suggests in his passages on the emergence of statistics...”⁷⁸⁸ That being said, the way that visibility was framed in relation to unaccompanied minors and adults differed vastly. According to my interviews with employees at the social services and those who had experience of working at accommodation facilities, it was expected that unaccompanied minors, in particular, given their extra precarious state of being, should be prevented from becoming missing subjects. Technologies of power would indeed put “...bodies under a surveilling gaze,” as biopolitical mechanisms would map the child’s patterns (always looking for deviant behavior), thereby enacting overall surveillance practices that entailed establishing social interactions with staff members and incorporating the child into everyday routines at the accommodation facilities. The unaccompanied minor is thereby (in)directly disciplined into keeping themselves visible through a system of “trust” (as accommodation facilities are not locked facilities) and are expected to adhere to the norms of the accommodation facilities.

Discourses produced by the interviewees employed at different social services offices in Sweden suggested that governing logics that make the unaccompanied minor *feel* visible, through different meaningful and social interactions, will *keep* the unaccompanied minor visible. When it came to unaccompanied minors, visibility in this sense is *framed* as a win-win for all parties involved in the asylum regime. Accommodation staff are expected to map and observe the behavior of unaccompanied minors, but the physical mobility of the unaccompanied minor is usually not hindered, as it is only in rare circumstances that they can be detained during the asylum-seeking process. Therefore, biopolitical technologies of power as control target aspects of sociability instead, hoping this, in turn, will keep the physicality of the subject visible. With adult asylum-seekers, however, there are rarely attempts to control the physicality of the asylum-seeking subject, unless they have been detained as a result of being a missing subject or if the asylum regime suspects that they will most definitely become a missing subject.

Instead, the interviews with staff at the SMA showed that the asylum-seeking process for adults is centered on promoting self-governance: they must only make themselves visible when it is asked of them. It disciplines the adult into adhering to the norms of the asylum regime, as they are told what can happen if they break this self-governance “trust,” i.e., they will be kept visible in a detention center. The norms that regulate what a “good and serious” asylum-seeker is, are regulated through access to information. Information that can be seen as promoting missingness, for example, when one’s case expires,

⁷⁸⁷ Tazzioli and Walters 2016, 447-448.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

is thus, at times controlled by employees at the SMA (and sometimes communicated by *other* employees at the SMA). In contrast to the governing logics for unaccompanied minors, the governing logics for adults thus suggest that if state employees at the SMA *feel* that the adult asylum-seeker will disappear, they could attempt to *keep* the adult asylum-seeker visible. Yet if SMA staff do not *feel* this way, there is a whole sphere of invisibility for asylum-seekers to elapse into, until they are beckoned back into visibility. In actuality, however, the ability to keep an adult asylum-seeker physically visible *before* ever having disappeared is quite restricted by law,⁷⁸⁹ which again: promotes a system of self-governance instead. What overarches this system of self-governance is the understanding that self-governance can quickly turn into punitive state governance (i.e., detention) if an asylum-seeker disappears. Hence, one can state thus far that attempts to control the potentiality of missingness appear to be greater than attempts to control the missing subject itself. The physicality of the missing subject is *directly* targeted when the missing subject is no longer missing, the aim being to prevent missingness from occurring once again.

8.3 Creating and facilitating missingness

Despite these technologies of power as control that are found operating particularly in the pre-disappearance and post-disappearance phases, there are instances in which it appears that state employees simultaneously (and paradoxically) allow for missingness to occur, thus creating and facilitating the space for its existence. Quite ironically, one of the main findings in this thesis shows that missingness is also governed through the acceptance of its inevitable occurrence. Missingness is, at times, governed not only by preventing subjects from going missing, but also by taking into account and planning for its inevitable occurrence and its uncertainty. Subsequently, some asylum-seeking subjects are granted informal permission to slip through the fingers of state employees who choose to look the other way. What can appear to be a lack of state control over missingness is at times a *planned* lack of control. The messiness of missingness is thereby, at times, when one digs beneath the surface, a paradoxically controlled mess. This would seem confusing at first, but it appears that state institutions can gain control by losing control, contradicting the notion that the state *wants to be* all-knowing, all-incorporating, and all-seeing. I have found missingness to be (in)directly facilitated through practices such as: the registration of private accommodation for adult asylum-seekers, planning interviews with the assumption that a certain percentage of adults will be missing, and the informal pre-determination and pre-categorization of

⁷⁸⁹ Migrationsverket 2018b, 1230-1231 in PDF form.

some (read: in particular Moroccan unaccompanied minors) as missing even when they are physically visible.

By implementing these practices, the SMA has the potential to gain control over a situation that at first glance would appear to be “ungovernable.” For example, as thoroughly explained in Chapter 6, the Swedish asylum regime is quite unique in “allowing” adult asylum-seekers to register private addresses with the SMA, as compared to more stringent countries such as Australia (...although the Swedish system is increasingly undergoing new and problematic regulatory measures). As interviewees at the SMA explained, certain addresses reappear again and again as “bogus addresses,” meaning that the SMA can assume that the asylum-seeker does not actually live there and may, thereby, potentially become missing.⁷⁹⁰ Despite this, the address is registered, in the hope that, regardless of where the asylum-seeker actually lives, news will somehow reach them regarding when it is their turn to be beckoned into the sphere of visibility by the SMA. It can be assumed that allowing asylum-seekers to live in private accommodation – a situation in which their right to economic assistance does not increase drastically compared to if they were living in state-provided accommodation – is financially beneficial to the SMA. It can also be assumed that the SMA prioritizes this financial gain over exerting different technologies of power as control to keep asylum-seekers physically visible. The asylum-seeker who registers one of these reoccurring addresses may be seen as a *potential* missing subject by SMA employees, but this potentiality is not acted on at this stage.

As also examined in Chapter 6, one can assume that it has been financially beneficial for a quantifying institution such as SMA to map nationalities with different mobilities, thereby predicting which nationalities are at risk of disappearing. In this way, nationalities deemed to be “unserious” asylum-seekers and at risk of disappearing can receive an interview time earlier than those deemed to be “serious” (read: will make themselves visible when it is asked of them) asylum-seekers. When it comes to interviews at the Return Unit, disappearances are also expected and planned for according to mapped patterns of assumed previous behavior, registered addresses and/or nationalities,⁷⁹¹ and interview times are hence overbooked on purpose. The *potential* missing subject is thereby produced into visibility by governing logics, hypothetically created through the assemblage of fragments of information, made knowledgeable for the asylum regime, and treated as missing without officially being missing. Particularly in this instance, there is a danger that the SMA’s prioritization of saving financial resources may entail that state employees risk collectivizing what should always be treated as individual claims to asylum. In comparison to the initial phase of registering a so-called “bogus address” with

⁷⁹⁰ Interview E09, E17, and E20.

⁷⁹¹ Interview E09.

the SMA, the *potential* missing subject is acted on at this stage by being accounted for and thus excluded from the normal practices in place for those asylum-seekers deemed to be “serious.”

According to these examples, the SMA has created an opportunity to financially capitalize on the inevitable potentiality of missingness. Missingness has posed a challenge to the system, and thus the system has adjusted to meet this challenge, or as one interviewee at the SMA explained, to adjust to the “reality” of the situation.⁷⁹² The potential of adult asylum-seekers going missing is taken into calculated consideration, thereby saving resources. According to the discourses produced by state employees interviewed at the SMA, I found that the SMA monopolizes not only different technologies of power as control, but also the image of “non-control.” This appears to be an active choice operationalized through logics of governance within this specific site, rather than a blind spot. It allows for the idea of the missing subject to be controlled rather than the physicality of the subject. If the asylum-seeking subject later disappears, their conceptual visibility is still available for governance, despite their physical invisibility, due to overarching governing logics that, above all, prioritize incorporation into the asylum-seeking system.

In addition to potentially facilitating and planning for missingness, thereby saving financial resources, Swedish politicians have increasingly critiqued (albeit for different reasons) current asylum legislation for providing the space to *go* missing, as examined in Chapter 6. The current legislation entails that one can seek asylum again after a 4-year period (or an 18-month period if their case is to be administered according to the Dublin Regulation).⁷⁹³ Some might agree with the politicians who argue that the timeframe encourages disappearances to begin with and should thus be eliminated as an “opportunity.” However, others might agree with the politicians who argue that the timeframe inhumanely creates a long wait for those who will go missing regardless of the timespan and should not be further increased to ten years, as is currently being discussed.⁷⁹⁴ Regardless of opinions about motivation, incentive, or opportunity, for those who have received a negative decision in their asylum case, entering the sphere of (in)visibility as undocumented is equivalent to entering a temporal or spatial milieu carved out by the system itself. The parliamentary debates currently ongoing are framed in relation to how difficult or easy this temporal/spatial milieu should be for those residing in it.

The recent change in legislation in July 2016, which entails that those aged eighteen and over with rejected asylum claims and deportation decisions with expired “voluntary” return dates will no longer have the right to daily allowance or housing,⁷⁹⁵ also feeds into this debate. As the interviewees explained,

⁷⁹² Ibid.

⁷⁹³ Migrationsverket 2021e; and Flyktinggruppens Riksråd (FARR) (no date).

⁷⁹⁴ Lann 2020.

⁷⁹⁵ Länsstyrelsen Stockholm 2016a, 7-8.

those who were affected by this legislation change were told to either live on the streets or find their own accommodation,⁷⁹⁶ despite their deportation orders. It is as if legislation such as this were brought on by the assumption that this carved out temporal/spatial milieu created by the system should be presented to asylum-seekers as unbearable in comparison to the act of being deported. It entails "...exclusion from the community, from the law, and from security."⁷⁹⁷ Or once again, perhaps there is purely a financial incentive behind it: fewer people physically visible within the system and needing accommodation equals lower financial costs, even if this entails a population that will instead be physically invisible in the gaze of state institutions. In the words of Chamayou, "[t]oday, illegalization is no longer similar to ancient formulas of banishment, but exposes one to the predation of the labor market. Market predation and sovereign exclusion develop close relations of complementarity: hunts to expel and hunts to acquire."⁷⁹⁸ Undocumentedness, in particular, entails "...the paradoxical inclusion of these new disposed by law into relationships of exploitation at the same time that it makes them vulnerable through active policies of tracking them and making them feel insecure."⁷⁹⁹ These two technologies of predation that compose a so-called "manhunt," a hunt of expulsion and a hunt of pursuit,⁸⁰⁰ are both found operating in the governance of missingness. But in this case, the hunting ground is demarcated by the SMA (the ground of exclusion), and the hunting license is granted to the police (a hunt that captures).

Those who are, to a certain extent, expected to prevent the asylum-seeking subject from becoming a missing subject also play a role in enforcing the asylum legislation that is inevitably criticized for leading to more disappearances (i.e., creating the hunting ground). As examined in Chapter 7, state employees at the SMA who make asylum case decisions could simultaneously be found expressing notions of empathy concerning why someone might go missing, hoping that their time spent in the temporal/spatial milieu carved out by the system itself is not as exploitative as previous research has shown it to be.⁸⁰¹ That being said, compared to the certain technologies of power as control that are found operating within the asylum regime, examining how missingness is governed becomes increasingly perplexing when the possibility of missingness appears to also be facilitated, planned for, and produced by the practices of state employees. Missingness appears to be governed within a regime that is leaky, as the missing population appear to sometimes be a target of man-

⁷⁹⁶ Interview E18 and E19.

⁷⁹⁷ Chamayou 2012, 24.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁸⁰¹ See, e.g.: Sigvardsdotter 2013; Barnombudsmannen 2017; and Svenska Röda Korset and Stockholms Stadsmission 2015.

agement, but at other times not, calling into question the ontology of biopower. Future research endeavors should continue to explore to what extent this leakiness is actively produced and why.

8.4 Governing missingness through technologies of power as care

As the findings have shown thus far, the actuality of how missingness is governed has continued to reflect the messiness of the social world, as different technologies of power as control (and non-control) have been found to be at play, as examined through the discourses produced by state employees. But this thesis has also found that missingness is governed through different technologies of power as care, technologies that can sometimes be closely intertwined with different technologies of power as control. The findings continue to show that missingness is thereby governed through both a multitude of responses and an interplay of different technologies of power that have the potential to operate simultaneously, sometimes in contradiction to one another, and sometimes irrespective of one another. Technologies of power as control (i.e., mapping, labelling, governing temporal pasts and predicting future potentialities) are often merged with technologies of power as care (i.e., preventing exploitation by enabling appropriate resources). Technologies of power as care are mainly predominant in the discourses produced in relation to unaccompanied minors. As examined in depth in Chapter 7, compared to missing adult asylum-seekers, in relation to whom missingness is often viewed by state employees as a choice (unless there are indications of human trafficking), missing unaccompanied minors are generally produced as more vulnerable and in need of protection. Consequently, self-governance is not a governing logic that is applied to unaccompanied minors to the same extent. There are far greater attempts to prevent missingness among unaccompanied minors, and control is sometimes justified as a result of this.

Regarding unaccompanied minors, vulnerabilities associated with missingness are often framed by state employees as solely produced outside the system. These vulnerabilities are rarely framed as produced by the system itself, for example, through asylum legislation that keeps some asylum-seekers in limbo. This creates a dichotomy in which the system is portrayed as “safe” and “the protector,” while choosing to leave the system creates a space outside the system that is both dark and ungovernable. Based on the discourses produced by some interviewees working at the social services, this technology of power as care in the form of pastoral power is expressed by keeping the subject within the system and “within the shepherd’s flock.” However, it does not appear to always apply to *all* unaccompanied minors. Some (read: Moroccan

unaccompanied minors) are pre-categorized and pre-labelled as “street children,” as already belonging to the space outside the system that is both dark and ungovernable, despite attempts to access the “safe” and “protecting” sphere. They are often produced as missing subjects even when they are physically visible, as they are pre-determined by state employees to be “unserious” and “deviant” in their asylum claims and, thereby, pre-expected by state employees to disappear. As explained by one interviewed police officer, when these unaccompanied minors do subsequently thereafter and come to be over-represented in the statistics produced on missingness, the system and those employed within the system become “fatigued.”⁸⁰² Their disappearances are framed as a *disruption* to the asylum regime, rather than as a *consequence* of it.

The aim of technologies of biopower is usually described as managing populations, but once again, specific nationalities, such as Moroccan unaccompanied minors, are, by some, produced through discourses as pre-determined to go missing and thereby unmanageable. Despite having the same access to rights as other asylum-seeking children, the so-called fatigue experienced by the system can have consequences for the lived realities of those children. Lauren B. Wilcox warns us that, with contemporary practices of security, the produced demarcation of certain bodies as normal and other bodies as aberrant/unmanageable can have horrendous outcomes, as, “[v]iolence against these deviant bodies is made necessary in order to preserve these naturalized bodies.”⁸⁰³ Yet for those unaccompanied minors deemed to be “serious” and thereby “normal” asylum-seekers, technologies of power in the matrix form of biopower and pastoral power appear to want to keep and protect them within the system, as they are thought to belong to the system. As examined in Chapter 7, interviewees at the social services often emphasized the importance of social relations with unaccompanied minors, not only in order to prevent disappearances, but throughout the asylum process, thereby prioritizing physical visibility over conceptual visibility within the system. Some of the interviewed social workers portrayed themselves as a governing mother within the welfare state, concerned for the wellbeing of the unaccompanied minors assigned to them. Once again, relationships that make the unaccompanied minor feel visible and are built on empathy and trust are meant to keep the unaccompanied minor visible.

Searching for missing unaccompanied minors, as expressed by one state employee working together with social services to locate missing children,⁸⁰⁴ is tied to broader discourses portrayed as caring: lost children must be found, regardless of their reason for disappearing. Missingness must come to a clear

⁸⁰² Interview E14.

⁸⁰³ Wilcox 2015, 26-27.

⁸⁰⁴ Interview E13.

and concise end according to this strategy, a strategy that prioritizes the governance of physical bodies over conceptual visibility within a system. This strategy prioritizes finding the individual embedded within the statistics, regardless of the missing subject's own wishes. As this is often framed in relation to the wellbeing of the unaccompanied minor, technologies of pastoral power are located, as we find that power is portrayed as "...exercised over a multiplicity in movement (a flock); it is fundamentally beneficent (caring for the flock), and it individualizes its subjects (knowing each member of the flock individually). A mobile, beneficent, and individualizing power."⁸⁰⁵ The unaccompanied minor that is missing must be found and reincorporated back into the system, in which practices of surveillance and control are justified in the "...name of protecting the flock."⁸⁰⁶ Preventing the disappearances of unaccompanied minors is justified for the same reasons. However those who are already deemed to be missing before going missing may be "sacrificed" along the way.⁸⁰⁷

This view, however, is not held by all employees who were interviewed at the social services. This thesis has found that, for some, missingness is still governed, it is just governed outside the "formal system" where governance is often *expected* to operate. Missingness is thus governed within the Swedish asylum regime through both formal and informal routes. As examined in depth in Chapter 7, there appears to be a tension in which some social services employees want to reincorporate the missing unaccompanied minor back into the system, while others choose to embrace the inbetweenness that missingness entails within the system. This inbetweenness is embraced by keeping in touch with those who are formally registered as missing or expelled from the system. As one social worker explained in an interview, after their formal responsibility for an unaccompanied minor had ended, they will use different avenues to find out "...what's happened, if he's alive, why he disappeared."⁸⁰⁸ Other interviewees explained that missing unaccompanied minors sometimes get in touch with the social workers on their own accord, to check-in and tell them how they are doing or where they are,⁸⁰⁹ thereby partaking in the self-governance of their own missingness.

Other employees within the social services would (in)formally view this missingness as a form of resistance to what is seen as an increasingly rigid asylum regime, at times hoping that those missing will have better luck seeking asylum elsewhere.⁸¹⁰ In this sense, there is still an emphasis on keeping the unaccompanied minor visible, but this visibility is seen as being unrelated

⁸⁰⁵ Chamayou 2012, 15.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁰⁸ Interview E11.

⁸⁰⁹ Interview E03 and E31.

⁸¹⁰ Interview E05, E27, E28, and E30.

to formal governing logics. What matters in this case is the physicality and wellbeing of the missing subject, irrespective of their registered status in the system. This informal wellbeing status report can either be delivered by the unaccompanied minor themselves or investigated by the social worker. The point is, however, that despite being formally recognized as absconding within the system (or subsequently expelled), the missing subject might not be “missing” in relation to everyone. Authentic to its original Foucauldian understanding, biopower and pastoral power are co-operating in this sense. Life in its genuine state becomes the target of this type of governance regardless of whether it exists within or outside the system, as the portrayed wellbeing of the missing subject is produced as the overall goal through discourses of empathy and care.

8.5 Final remarks

In conclusion, this thesis has examined how the phenomena of missingness and governance relate to one another by looking at how missingness is governed within the Swedish asylum regime. It has delved into the different technologies of power that attempt to manage the uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of missingness, as produced through the discourses of state employees within the asylum regime. When embarking on writing this thesis, I strived to find answers to the following question: *How is missingness governed within the Swedish asylum regime, and what does this tell us about different technologies involved in the governance of migration?* This thesis has found that missingness is governed within the asylum regime in a multitude of ways. By challenging governance and its logics of presence and absence, governing logics have thereby grappled with the potentialities, actualities, and aftermath of missingness.

The empirical research presented in this study has shown that similar technologies of power are found to be at play when missingness is governed, such as when migration in general is governed. Disciplinary power, biopower, and pastoral power are all present in the struggle to manage missingness. Yet in comparison to previous research focusing on one or two of these technologies of power, as shown in Chapter 3, this thesis has demonstrated that all three technologies of power can be found operating within the same site, sometimes irrespective of one another, sometimes simultaneously, and sometimes intertwined. When governing logics are disrupted by missingness or have the potential to be disrupted by missingness, these three technologies of power can still be found in circulation, (in)formally deployed by state employees attempting to manage missingness. Hence, by denying the state the status of a self-existent entity, and by engaging with a multitude of state employees, a more complex reading of governance is produced. As previously quoted in

this thesis, Reiko Shindo states, “[w]hat sovereign power cannot tolerate is the ambiguity of subjects.”⁸¹¹ Yet, through my findings, it appears that it sometimes does tolerate this, and sometimes it does not. Moreover, sometimes it does not know what it is doing. There appears to be a tension between how the missing subject is *portrayed* as governed and how missingness *is* governed, as displayed through my four main findings.

First, despite being physically invisible, the missing subject is made conceptually visible within the system. This enables the idea that the missing subject can become governable, even though the actual missing subject is nowhere to be found. The missing subject, when bureaucratized into a code, thereby becomes “known” and bureaucratically controllable within the case file. But parallel to this, missingness itself is governed through a multitude of responses, and through an interplay of different technologies of power. In practice, its complexity does not allow for a clear-cut answer that is reducible to a code. Despite the missing subject’s portrayal as bureaucratically graspable, state employees differ in their struggles and attempts to grasp its occurrence and existence. Thus, missingness can be found to be governed through technologies of power as control, in particular the potentiality of missingness for both unaccompanied minors and adults, but also the aftermath of missingness for mainly adults in the form of detention centers. Missingness is, however, also facilitated at times, in that it is governed through the acceptance of its inevitable occurrence. The system has thereby adjusted to meet the challenges that it has been confronted with. And finally, regarding unaccompanied minors in particular, missingness is also governed through technologies of power as care, which are difficult to separate from technologies of power as control. Surprisingly, this implies that missingness is not only formally governed within Swedish asylum regime, but sometimes also informally governed.

These findings speak to the necessity for research to unpack what it means when biopolitical governing logics are faced with uncertainty. By uncovering the gaps and breakages, and slippages between how the missing subject is *portrayed* as governed and how missingness *is* governed, the idea of the state as all-knowing and all-seeing is dismantled. A fragility is revealed, because through the reflections, emotions, and practices of state employees, we find that the “apparatus” is forced to stop, think, (re)categorize, (re)adjust, leave behind, and carry on when it is faced with uncertainty, *despite* official guidelines on how to (re)act. Although official procedures are put in place where the *idea* of the missing subject can now be governed, state employees appear to struggle with whether or not the *physicality* of the missing subject can and should be governed, as well as the space left behind and, at times, their personal role within this governance. Different technologies of power are found to be operating depending on how state employees interpret the way in which

⁸¹¹ Shindo 2018, 194.

they should (or should not) manage missingness. Although state employees are still constrained by overall governing logics even when attempting to resist these logics, this thesis offers a starting point for locating when and how these boundaries are pushed, as *disruptions* to governing logics have the possibility to *change* governing logics. The missing subject is also constrained by overall governing logics, even when resisting these logics. Going missing as undocumented entails entering an “ungovernable” temporal/spatial milieu carved out by the system itself.

Despite these constraints, governance appears to be messy, especially when we look at the unofficial discourses being produced in the corridors of everyday bureaucratic institutions by state employees, whose practices impact the lived realities of those within (or currently avoiding) their gaze. Although I have only begun to scratch the surface, for interviewees working within the asylum regime in Sweden (not including social workers found to be resisting SMA decisions), disappearances appear to often be framed as an inevitable challenge or byproduct of the asylum regime, rather than as a *consequence* of it. Similarly, vulnerabilities appear to often be framed as being produced in the space *outside* the system, rather than being produced by the system *itself*. It would also be interesting to hear more perspectives from employees within the police, as they are tasked with governing the physicality of the missing subject to a much greater extent than are employees at the SMA or social services. I thereby encourage future research endeavors to engage with this perspective as well.

As a final remark on the findings in this thesis and the ways in which they have the potential to contribute to future research endeavors, the “mundanity of the everyday” in the hallways, receptions, interview rooms, and cafeterias of bureaucracy has led me to find very un-mundane inconsistencies within the system. Critical research that has made a breakthrough among scholars writing on migration has had a tendency to examine the ultimate manifestations of violence that asylum-seekers and migrants have suffered at the hands of the asylum regime. This research has focused on phenomena from the extremities of bare life, at one end of the spectrum, to the potentialities of agentic migrant resistance, at the other end.⁸¹² Yet by examining the microphysics of the everyday from the production and usage of specific terminologies to the establishment of specific routines in relation to missingness, this thesis acknowledges that there is, of course, something to be said about the “slow violence of the everyday” within the asylum regime,⁸¹³ regardless of whether that violence is produced directly and/or indirectly by the system itself.

When looking within the system itself through the perspectives of state employees, beyond the extremities of direct violence and more in-depth within the “slowness of the everyday,” we find uncertainties and ambiguities in how

⁸¹² For more on this, please consult Chapter 3.

⁸¹³ See, e.g.: Mayblin et al. 2020.

missingness is governed. By using the reflections, emotions, and routines related by the interviewed state employees themselves, the image of the well-oiled asylum regime as a machine or a Jabberwocky is called into question. If, in this thesis, it had been taken for granted that the asylum regime is a well-oiled machine, the opportunity to examine what is really at stake when the relationship between missingness and governance is dissected would have potentially been missed. With regard to neoliberal governmentality and its governing logics, the findings in this thesis encourage future research endeavors to further examine how governing logics attempt to manage ambiguities and uncertainties. To what extent do governing logics incorporate uncertainties (such as uncertainties in the form of invisibilities) into their logics? If governing logics are disrupted, does the system itself adjust to the potentialities, existence and aftermath of these disruptions, thereby enacting a paradoxical performance of control, as in the case of missingness in Sweden?

By examining how missingness is governed, this thesis has studied the governance of a space that is devoid of physical matter. Understanding this space, in relation to governing logics organized around presence or absence, is of importance to future research endeavors, as we live in a world where notions of presence and absence are increasingly and consistently being re-invented. For example, as shown through Critical Security Studies (CSS) research, the digitalized self (and thereby conceptual visibility) is increasingly taking on its own life form irrespective of the physicality of the human body,⁸¹⁴ thereby changing governing logics as we previously “knew and recognized them.” Understanding the relationship between missingness and governance, and how missingness has the potential to both disrupt and alter governing logics, also enables us to address greater questions of resistance, including not only resistance to being asked to remain *visible* in the gaze of state institutions, but also resistance to being asked to remain *invisible* by state institutions. To what extent can neoliberal governmentality and its governing logics be *resisted* through disruptions, such as, in this case, missingness? Does finding leakages, breakages, and acts of resistance within the system itself provide opportunities for future positive and beneficial changes within the system, and for those whose lived realities are regularly being affected by the asylum regime as a whole? In my opinion, in a world where we are on a steep path toward an ever-so dystopian future, nothing could be more rewarding than finding pockets where new and alternative political imaginaries might be possible. This is a call for future researchers and research endeavors to find them.

⁸¹⁴ For more on this, please consult Chapter 3.

Appendix I: Swedish to English Translations

Please note that the following document includes terms that I have translated from Swedish to English and have thereafter used in this thesis. They are included in this appendix for reasons of transparency, as some of the terms either have a variety of possible translations or are terms mainly used in bureaucratic sites.

- *Ansökningsenhet*: Application Unit
- *Asyl*: asylum
- *Asylprövningsenhet*: Asylum Unit
- *Avviken*: absconding
- *Barn/barnet*: children/child
- *Beslutsfattare*: decisionmaker
- *Boende*: accommodation center/facility
- *Fånga upp dem*: gather them up
- *Försvunnen*: missing
- *Förvar/förvaret*: detention center (direct translation: storage)
- *Förvarstagna*: detainees (direct translation: taken into storage)
- *Godman*: appointed guardian
- *Gömd*: hidden
- *Handläggare*: caseworker
- *Har koll*: in control of/over, overview
- *Journalanteckning*: journal entry
- *Leva som gömd*: live as hidden
- *Leva som papperslös*: live as undocumented
- *Leva under jorden*: live underground
- *Lever under jorden*: living underground
- *Migrationskommittén*: Migration Committee
- *Mottagningsenhet*: Reception Unit
- *Myndigheten*: the agency
- *Myndigheter*: authorities
- *Papperslös/papperslösa*: undocumented
- *Rådgivningsbyrån för asylsökande och flyktingar*: Swedish Refugee Law Center
- *Svider*: burns
- *Sätta sig över*: trump

- *Tjänsteanteckning*: official entry
- *Ungdomar*: teenagers
- *Utlänning*: foreigner
- *Verkställa*: execute/deport
- *Verkställighet*: execution/deportation
- *Återvändandeenheten*: Return Unit
- *Återvändandedirektivet*: Return Directive
- *Övervakning*: surveillance

Appendix II: Statistics on Abscondment 2015-2021

This table was provided via e-mail correspondence (see: Migrationsverket 2021b) with the Swedish Migration Agency's Statistics and Analysis Department. It shows how many individuals were registered by the SMA as absconding between 2015 and 2021. Asylum-seekers registered as absconding are represented in the row entitled *asyl* (meaning asylum in Swedish):

Summa av Antal avvikna	Adressändring år							
Ursprung Ärendekategori 2a	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Totalsumma
-	19	21	12	26	13	30	20	141
Anknytning	104	73	88	94	150	99	79	687
Arbetsmarknad	105	124	155	213	185	111	106	999
Asyl	9678	7909	7276	7251	6260	5099	3119	46592
EU/EES	44	57	56	65	98	130	77	527
Okänd/Felreg	2	2	2	1	1			8
Studier	36	23	30	18	19	18	28	172
Tillfälligt besök	10	9	24	22	35	73	46	219
Verkställighetshinder	3	5	6	1	2	4	6	27
Visering	1		1		2			4
Återkallande	35	27	55	30	55	57	41	300
Tillfällig vistelse				1				1
Totalsumma	10037	8250	7705	7722	6820	5621	3522	49677

Appendix III: List of Interviewees

Please note that position/unit descriptions differ in the following table, as I allowed interviewees to define their position/unit of employment in a way that they felt would best protect their anonymity. For this reason as well, the geographical location of units/departments has been excluded from this thesis, as well as the dates of the interviews.

Interview Code	Number of Interviewees	Institution	Position/Unit (as defined by interviewee)
E01	1	SMA	Expert
E02	1	SMA	Employee at Asylum Unit
E03	1	SS	Social Worker
E04	1	SMA	Team Leader at Detention Center
E05	3	SS	1 Head of Unit & 2 Social Workers
E06	1	SS	1 Head of Unit
E07	1	*	Works with network created by Stockholm County Admin. Board
E08	1	SS	Social Worker
E09	1	SMA	Employee working with Return process
E10	1	*	Caseworker at SMA & Social Worker
E11	1	SS	Social Worker
E12	1	SS	Social Worker
E13	1	*	Works together with SS to locate unaccompanied minors
E14	1	P	Police officer
E15	1	P	Employee within the police
E16	1	SMA	Employee at Return Unit
E17	1	SMA	Employee at the Application Unit
E18	1	SMA	Leadership position
E19	1	SMA	Employee at Reception Unit
E20	1	SMA	Caseworker at Asylum Unit
E21	1	SMA	Experience from different units within the SMA
E22	1	SMA	Team Leader at Asylum Unit
E23	1	SS	Social Worker
E24	1	SMA	Experience from different units within the SMA
E25	1	SMA	Team Leader at Detention Center
E26	1	SMA	Assistant Staff Worker at Detention Center
E27	1	SS	Leadership position
E28	1	SS	Leadership position
E29	1	SMA	Employee at Reception Unit
E30	1	SMA	Team Leader at Return Unit
E31	3	SS	1 Team Leader & 2 Social Workers
E32	1	SMA	Employee at Detention Center
*	1	P	(Police officer. Off the record, therefore not included in empirics)

Key for abbreviations:

E: Entry
 SMA: Swedish Migration Agency
 SS: Social Services
 P: Police
 *: Difficult to classify

Interviews conducted that were later excluded from this thesis:

1 employee within an NGO working with unaccompanied minors
 1 employee within an NGO working with unaccompanied minors
 1 employee at an accommodation center

Total number of interviewees: 40

17 individuals at SMA
 14 individuals at SS
 3 individuals at P
 3 difficult to classify
 3 later excluded

Appendix IV: Swedish Summary

För en starkt kontrollerad och omfattande välfärdsstat som Sverige så kan det antas att inkorporeringen av befolkningen i ett byråkratiskt förvaltningssystem (och att hålla den där) skulle vara avgörande för dess övergripande funktionalitet. Antingen görs populationen till en del av systemet och är på så vis hanterad inom det eller så är den exkluderad från systemet och hanteras därmed inte längre. När det svenska asylsystemet har försökt utöva kontroll över migranter genom en skärpning av asylpolitiken har dock samma system visat att en striktare asylpolitik även leder till att fler asylsökande som får avslag försvinner. Det svenska asylsystemet tycks därmed paradoxalt nog delta i det (in)direkta skapandet och möjliggörandet av något jag kallar för *missingness* ("försvunnenhet"): ett tvetydigt rum som stör den övergripande logik enligt vilken befolkningen är antingen närvarande eller frånvarande inom ett byråkratiskt system. Denna avhandling syftar till att undersöka styrningen av *missingness* inom det svenska asylsystemet. Genom att studera diskurser som produceras i intervjuer med statlig anställda som har hand om asylprocessen så utforskar avhandlingen hur statlig anställda vid tre olika myndigheter försöker hantera den osäkerhet som *missingness* innebär. Med hjälp av ett foucauldianskt perspektiv på makt analyseras styrningen av *missingness* i relation till olika maktteknologier. Avhandlingen finner att olika tillstånd av *missingness* styrs på en rad olika sätt, genom disciplinär makt, biomakt, och pastoral makt.

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