
Building Belonging through Art with Young Migrants Living in Care in South Africa

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As young people with migration experiences build their lives in new contexts, their connectedness to who they are, to other people, to place and to culture underpin whether and how a sense of belonging is built in their lives. Belonging as a concept matters in young lives as it is underpinned by feelings of acceptance, inclusion and self-determination. The realization of belonging can have important implications for young people's wellbeing and development. This paper shares the barriers to belonging for young migrants in South Africa, and how the pain of past experiences, and the exclusions they are navigating in the present constrain their sense of agency, impacting self-worth and relationship formation. We share how a child and youth care center in Cape Town specializing in supporting young migrants and young people with experiences of trauma, innovated with a group of young women through participatory arts-based methods towards building belonging. We found that layering multiple arts methods can support young people to connect to their cultural roots and personal relationships, re-build trust, reimagine their identities as part of a collective and challenge power relations around gender, nationality and generation. We found that building belonging should be seen as a continuous learning process, that builds young people's reflective capacities to understand self and others and to make sense of the interaction between past, present and future. In turn, belonging provides an important conceptual tool for youth-led, context-specific approaches to working with young migrants, including on youth transitions.

Keywords: belonging, identities, youth, migration, participation, arts methods, care

INTRODUCTION

Belonging, understood as our connection to people, culture, place and subjective sense of home, and mediated by a politics of inclusion and exclusion, (Antonsich 2010) has particular relevance to young people with migration experiences (De-Graeve and Bex 2017; Harris 2016; Magqibelo et al. 2016). Young people that migrate are navigating changes in relationships, as well as in social, political and economic contexts. As young people work to build their lives in new contexts, the relationship between their past and the present can come into tension (Kistner 2015; Kohli 2011). Young migrants are working to make sense of the changing dynamics of their attachments and identities, and at the same time processing past pains including those related to loss and violence (Denov and Shevell 2019; Clacherty 2015). These experiences and emotions are being negotiated alongside new and changing desires and aspirations including for their families, communities and within society (Kohli 2011; Opfermann 2019). Young migrants are longing to belong, and at the same time trying to make sense of what they long for (Probyn 1996). How belonging is determined for young people with migration experiences is also deeply interwoven in the politics of who is seen as welcome within society (Antonsich 2010; Yuval-Davis 2006). Many young migrants face a reality of unbelonging as socially produced lines of difference, of exclusion, are drawn in their lives within their new contexts (Christensen 2009).

The influence these dynamics have on young people's ongoing identity formation and sense of having 'a place in the world' (Arendt 1971: 296), can have significant implications for their wellbeing and the foundations from which they are building their futures (Correa-Velez et al. 2010; Gonzales et al. 2013). In South Africa, young migrants' resilience is tested on a daily basis through their navigation of everyday and institutional xenophobia, alongside racialized inequalities established through apartheid and colonialism. Global research has shown that where a sense of isolation, loss or being an outsider is dominant in young migrants' lives, their identities and belonging can be destabilized (Huot et al. 2014; Kaukko and Wernesjö 2017). For young people with migration experiences living in residential care, relationships can involve a new sense of instability, which can perpetuate loneliness and feelings of being an outsider (Ní Raghallaigh and Sirriyeh 2015). Feelings of being out of place can be further amplified at the age of 18 when young people transition into legal adulthood and out of the care of the state (Bengtsson and Mølholt 2018).

Research and practice that work with young migrants to understand their lived experiences of belonging provide an opportunity to comprehend the interplay of personal, emotional factors and sociocultural and political dynamics as they build their lives in new contexts. This knowledge can help build insight into how young people make sense of their past and present life experiences, build meaningful connections and attachments, and develop a sense of possibility for the future (Bradbury and Clark 2012). This knowledge has the potential to foster young people's capacities to forge identities and belonging, and to navigate the barriers to belonging. These capacities can also provide an important foundation for the social and institutional

transitions young migrants will navigate at the age of 18. There is limited knowledge however, globally and in the South African context, on how to foster an everyday sense of belonging with young migrants, including those living in residential care (Kaukko and Wernesjö 2017; Valentine et al. 2009).

This paper discusses the development of a participatory arts project that aimed to creatively engage young people with migration experiences in building belonging. The commitment to participation emphasizes the importance of understanding young people's perspectives on belonging and the need to respond to their understanding and aspirations for how it can be nurtured in their lives. Participatory arts approaches create space for young people to grow confidence in self-expression, to build relationships and to share experiences with other youth, artists and practitioners (Nunn 2018; Marnell and Hoosain Khan 2015). The creative focus builds on the empowering qualities of arts-based methods, recognizing that words do not always support people with migration experiences to connect to and communicate complex experiences in a culturally and emotionally appropriate way (Kohli 2005; Lenette 2019). Taking a strength-based approach within creative methods also emphasizes the remembering of past abilities, to build strength of self and hope for the future (Norton and Sliet 2018). Building on the therapeutic and restorative possibilities of arts approaches (Koch and Weidinger-von der Recke 2009; Leavy 2018; Reavey 2011), the work presented here connects to calls within social work practice to better understand the role of art in supporting people with migration experiences (Denov and Shevell 2019).

This paper argues that participatory arts approaches can provide an important space for young people's safe and supported exploration of their identities and can nurture their capacities for building a sense of belonging. Through long-term engagement, these methods can support young people to reconnect to their sense of self, to have control of the narratives of their identities and to have the tools to build their relationships with community and society. To establish this argument, the paper first sheds light on the realities of migrant young people who are living in residential care in Cape Town, South Africa, and the barriers that undermine their sense of belonging. Secondly, it introduces the specific case of Lawrence House, a child and youth care center, that has evolved a youth-centered praxis focused on supporting young migrants to strengthen their sense of self, relationships and resilience. Thirdly, the paper shares the specific development of a layered, participatory arts-based approach within Lawrence House that aims to contribute to building a sense of belonging with these young migrants. We discuss how the approach engages young people in self-understanding, building trusting relationships, and mobilizing collective power in order to support their navigation of society. Throughout this paper we share our reflections on this work and conclude with implications for continuing practice. We do this from the perspectives of being in a leadership role at Lawrence House (Treves), and a collaborating researcher-practitioner (Shahrokh) who worked together, with artists, child and youth care workers and young people to develop the

participatory arts initiative. This paper contributes to knowledge on child and youth care practice with young migrants, and provides insights for researchers committed to social justice and transformation in research.

BARRIERS TO BELONGING FOR YOUNG MIGRANTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the context of South Africa, children and young people have moved to the country both independently, and as a part of family networks, for multiple reasons including, amongst others, extreme poverty and unemployment, violence and persecution including based on religion, ethnicity, and politics, in their countries of origin (Fritsch et al. 2010; Mahati and Palmary 2018; Magqibelo et al. 2016; Palmary 2009). Young people have often navigated extreme adversity journeying to South Africa (Hillier 2007), and trauma related to reasons for leaving their countries of origin is a pervasive reality for many (Clacherty 2015). Painful memories related to war, conflict, abandonment and abuse including sexual violence and exploitation, disrupt young people's lives, undermine trust and fracture meaningful relationships (Borg 2018). Where loss occurs, whether familial, cultural, societal or political, there is a loss of identity, and being able to see a "place in the world" (Arendt 1971: 296). These fractures can become embedded in young people's life narratives and this can create multiple and compounding barriers to belonging (Alayarian 2007).

Migrant young people in South Africa face complex challenges in building their lives. They often live insecurely with inadequate housing or shelter, face language barriers, and struggle to access education and health services (Magqibelo et al. 2016; Willie and Mfubu 2016). They are also confronted with new norms, roles and expectations around race, gender and power in South African society (Kihato 2007; Walker et al. 2017). They can be met by exclusionary social structures as the country bears the scars of apartheid's racialized systems of oppression. As Swartz et al. (2012: 36) suggest, young people "experience belonging to South African society...through their exclusion from it". This racialized exclusion manifests, socially, economically and politically for young South Africans as well. For young migrants from other African countries this exclusionary context mobilizes the politics of belonging in their lives in the form of everyday xenophobic violence (Landau 2012; Misago 2015) and bullying (Hlatshwayo and Vally 2014), which is fuelled by a sense of xenophobic sentiment within the state (Crush and Tawodzera 2014; Opfermann 2019). This impacts young people's ability to feel safe, stable and accepted in the context they are building their lives in. Kistner (2007) refers to migrants in South Africa as living in landscapes of past and present trauma, a conceptualization which corresponds with what Benjamin and Crawford-Browne (2010) refer to as the continuous trauma of young people living with pervasive violence in South Africa.

Through migration, many children and young people are unaccompanied or become separated from their families. South Africa's Children's Act (RSA 2005) commits to the care and protection of all children (a person under the age of 18) regardless of nationality. Young migrants in some circumstances find their way into

the child protection system. Research found that four per cent of young people in Cape Town's child and youth care centers are defined as non-citizens (Sloth-Nielsen and Ackermann 2015; RSA 2016). Not all children and young people are able to access the full resources of the child protection system as government service providers are not always aware of migrant children's right to equal protection (Willie and Mfubu 2016). Research by Magqibelo et al. (2016) found that context-specific care was not being prioritized for migrant children under the protection of the South African government, in particular with regard to their trauma and loss, alongside issues around legal documentation. This is in spite of the Department for Social Development (DSD) having guidelines for social workers on assisting unaccompanied children (DSD 2009).

Large numbers of unaccompanied children and young people struggle to be documented. There is a shortcoming in the South African Children's Act (RSA 2005) whose concept of care and protection does not entail the provision of legal status as a form of protection, or as a need necessary to ensure children's wellbeing (Ackermann 2018). The realization of one's legal rights, including the right to an identity, not only enables access to legal services and rights claims, but also can confirm a sense of having a valued and recognized identity. The mental health implications of being young and undocumented have been explored globally (Ellis et al. 2011), with research by Gonzales et al. (2013) in North America finding that young people's wellbeing and identity formation were constrained by their construction as 'illegal'. The missing of significant social milestones and constricted trajectories, alongside a sense of contracting social networks, created isolation and hopelessness. Living without documentation creates an incredible amount of uncertainty on young people's futures, in particular around the age of 18 where they are no longer protected as children by human rights law. Turning 18 can also be a significant rupture for young people living in state care, who must at the same time prepare for their transition to adulthood. Young migrants living in care often face a double burden when they transition into adulthood at 18 years as they are called upon to deal with how this experience relates to the immigration system, and the social care system. They may be transitioning out of care without legal documentation, or with a temporary status, and at the same leaving school and starting to live independently in a setting where they feel they are not accepted. Despite structural constraints, Gonzales et al. (2013) found that undocumented young people maintained hope in the face of hopelessness. This sense of hope was made possible in particular where young people had secure relationships and could build trust.

BUILDING BELONGING INTO CHILD AND YOUTH CARE PRACTICE WITH YOUNG MIGRANTS

Within the broader setting outlined above, the complex dynamics of young migrants' belonging in Cape Town provides the context for this work. The Lawrence House child and youth care center opened its doors in the city in 2005 to offer a residential

setting for unaccompanied migrant children and young people. This decision was taken, as there seemed no alternative solution to the situation of a group of over 20 young migrants stranded at the Ark shelter in Mfuleni township, outside Cape Town. Most of them had no appointed caregiver, were not accessing formal schooling and were undocumented. The then Child Care Act of 1983 was not giving clear instruction on the rights of non-nationals and their access to social services; hence social workers on the ground were unsure about their mandate concerning these children. With time, Lawrence House established itself within the residential care sector and the promulgation of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (RSA 2005), alongside consistent advocacy and lobbying work, solidified the general understanding that all children, irrespective of their nationality or legal status were entitled to the same protection and care.

Through ongoing reflective practice between child and youth care workers, social workers and the center manager, Lawrence House generated knowledge on the shared difficulties faced by this group of young people, in particular regarding their emotional wellbeing and social interaction. Of particular significance in unpacking these patterns was the persistent fracturing and fragmentation of young people's sense of belonging. The analysis was initially grounded in Lawrence House's use of the developmental assessment framework, the Circle of Courage. The Circle of Courage is a resilience-focused approach to working with young people, which is premised on the understanding that emotional health is connected to young people having a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity (NACCW 2014). Lawrence House staff found that young people tended to displace attachment to staff and the network of the care center, and that a sense of belonging in relation to their past, to kinship networks, culture, and their relation to their countries of origin was fractured. Dominant feelings that young people held, included a sense of loss, isolation, detachment, emotional numbness and challenges in sustaining relationships.

It was visible that the pains these young people had experienced, had moved with them across time and space, and were affecting their capacity to build belonging in their present and future lives (Alayarian 2007). The impact of this fractured sense of self and belonging, was exacerbated by anxiety and frustration linked to feelings of not having control over their lives (Ward 2011). This appeared to be amplified by being in an institutional care setting where young people often felt powerless over the decisions that affected their lives. Future transitional moments also came with fear of the unknown. The intersecting nature of past pains, present exclusions, and anxieties about the future were interacting with a decline in agency, mental wellbeing, and retreat from self-development, including less independence, scarce generosity and a continuous withdrawal into oneself.

This deeper understanding of the complex realities that young migrants faced, shaped Lawrence House's strength-based youth practice approach, which was linked to the need to counter the impact of trauma within migratory experiences. In doing so, Lawrence House emphasized a contextualized and grounded approach to youth

development and started to challenge practice that imposed linear, or external definitions of successful life transitions for young people (Everatt 2015). This was an integral part of recognizing young migrants' resilience, capabilities and agency in driving their development trajectories. Practice evolved to focus on creating journeys of self-discovery and self-reflection and to create opportunities to build knowledge and understanding through relational learning processes. The aim was to build empowered transitions where young people can replenish and move forward with choices, albeit not always with all solutions. Within this broader approach, and in a collaboration between the young people living in Lawrence House, the organization's programming staff and Thea Shahrokh as a researcher-practitioner, there was a sense that belonging as a process of personal and collective change, with implications for young people's present and future wellbeing, needed to be specifically engaged. The rest of the paper shares the emergence of a youth-centered, developmental, participatory and arts-based praxis within this setting and discusses its contribution to building belonging with young migrants.

NYUMBA YANGU (MY HOME): A PARTICIPATORY ARTS PROJECT CONNECTING SELF AND SOCIETY

Nyumba Yangu, a participatory arts project developed with young people living at Lawrence House focused on how young migrants locate themselves in the here and now, form emotional connections, relationships and a sense of place (Antonsich 2010). *Nyumba yangu*, meaning 'my home' in Swahili, evolved with a focus on connecting young people to finding their own sense of home in South Africa. The approach aimed to create space and time for young migrants to explore their identities and belonging through a reflexive, relational, and strength-based learning process that surfaced agentic acts. Lawrence House aimed to support young people to practice agency, grow resilience and build relational and political forms of belonging, in turn collapsing the difference felt between self and society. Drawing on critical childhood studies, for example the work of James and Prout (1990), it was evident that children and young people were established as social actors that produce meaning in their own right, and can direct their own journeys, including within new contexts (Goodman 2004; Denov and Bryan 2012). This project aimed to contribute to the refinement of young person-centered, participatory, and creative methodologies for working with young migrants to build their belonging (Green and Denov 2019; Kohli 2005; Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto 2019; Nunn 2018).

A participatory approach places young people at the center, and shifts power relations towards young people driving the process (Torre and Fine 2006). It means working with youth to move "beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world" (Freire 1982: 30). Creative and artistic expression can enable a freedom of expression that is not constrained by language, or expectations (Kohli 2005). Young people often feel defined by past traumas and experience a fragmented sense of self. Creative expression can support new ways of seeing and understanding both the self and so-

ciety, which can be a catalyst for countering narratives of being an outsider, and feelings of rejection (Heidenreich-Seleme and O'Toole 2012; Pink 2004; Harper 2002). Participatory, arts-based methods take multiple forms and can support visualization and self-representation from corporal expression such as dance and dramatization, to drawing and image creation methods such as body mapping, collages, and photography. The approach developed here focused on group-building and nurturing relationships through creative connection (Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto 2019). This emphasis also builds on youth development approaches, including the role of sport, that emphasize the power of positive social interactions and self-efficacy in building belonging (Burrmann et al. 2017).

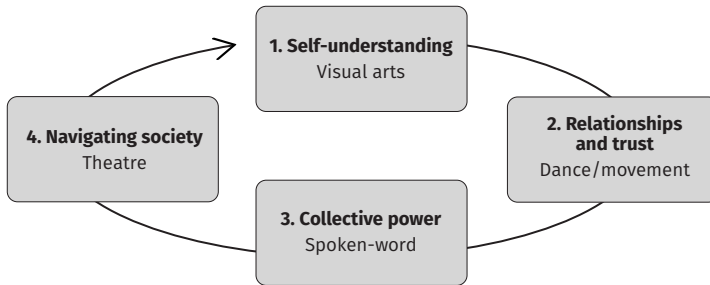
Drawing on lessons from art therapy, the approach was grounded in the premise that artistic and performative expression can remediate feelings of helplessness or powerlessness (Clacherty 2006; Kalmanowitz and Lloyd 2005), and support the identification of ways of healing, and defining self, through emotional expression (Österlind 2008). Connecting this art-making as an agentic practice to the development of positive interactions and relationships in the environments young migrants were building their lives in, shifted the focus of resilience in youth development work away from the individual, towards the social context within which resilience is interwoven and shaped (Kohli 2011). The use of creative and visual methods builds on a growing body of culturally sensitive, decolonizing, participatory work in South Africa that takes an adaptive and responsive approach to supporting the visibility of the voices of marginalized young people (Blackbeard and Lindegger 2015; Luttrell et al. 2012; Mitchell and De-Lange 2011; Mitchell et al. 2016) and young migrants (Clacherty 2016; Norton and Sliep 2018; Opfermann 2015, 2019).

The project was initiated with 10 young women between the ages of 14 and 19 living in Lawrence House. These young women had diverse experiences of migration and dislocation, including experiences of complex trauma as a result of abandonment, loss, trafficking and violence. The young women's countries of origins included Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Tanzania, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Somalia and South Africa. For a number of the young women it was difficult to identify a 'home' country, having spent many years moving between countries and with dual heritage parents, or having never lived in their ancestral lands. The project started with a young women's group, aiming to sustain previous group-building work at Lawrence House that had supported the beginnings of a collective identity between these young women. It also aimed at recognizing gendered experiences of violence and insecurity and creating a single gender space that would offer a sense of safety for the young women. For migrant young people, safety is an important marker of belonging (Kohli 2011).

This work took a layered, and emergent methodological approach (Wheeler et al. 2018) that built towards different kinds of change at personal and collective levels. Its aim was to generate more equitable and just experiences and transformed lived realities towards belonging for the young people involved (Cahill 2007). An

initial dialogue process with the young women on how and why a participatory arts project on belonging would be relevant to their lives, led to the process starting at the personal level, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A layered and emergent participatory arts-based approach aimed at building belonging



Starting with a focus on ‘self-understanding’, each new layer emerged, revealing the aspirations for knowledge and change, as expressed by the young women. This responsive approach was important for ensuring young people’s experiences with and reactions to the arts methods that drove the process. The project took place over a period of 12 months. Each methodological layer differed in its duration, depending on the aim of the process and the arts method. Ultimately, the first and the last layers ran over a longer-term – over four months each – with layers two and three running consecutively for six weeks at a time.

NYUMBA YANGU PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES

The methodological approach within the *Nyumba Yangu* project aimed to support the young women to move through cycles of sharing, listening and reflecting on their lived experiences as expressed through different artistic mediums. In doing so, the project envisaged to support the young people to see self, other and society differently as they learnt from their own and others’ experiences in new ways, and with a sense of safety in self-expression. This would also create mindfulness of the power relations and differential experiences of social marginalization between the young women in the group. These participants were supported within the project to engage in the way that they negotiated power amongst themselves and with others in their lives, to recognize that such power relations affected not only their everyday lives but also the participatory arts process. The following sections elaborate on the implementation of the *Nyumba Yangu* project, highlighting what was learnt about the process of building belonging with young migrants in care.

Self-understanding

The process was initiated with a set of artistic workshops facilitated by Shahrokh, that supported young people to explore, through the mediums of drama and visual arts, what belonging, or home, meant in their present lives, and the extent to which it mattered to them. As an external facilitator, Shahrokh focused on evolving a process that was driven by the young women and their aspirations. The facilitator also connected her own experience of living with Iranian-Scottish dual heritage and holding a migrant background in the United Kingdom and South Africa into the process, which supported conversations about complex and changing identities as they relate to context. Initially the discussions centered around the idea of unbelonging, as this was the dominant connection the young women felt to the concept. As shown in Figure 2 below, there was a sense of detachment between this young woman's close personal relationships. The young woman who created this image explained that her relationships were separated not only by geographical, but by emotional distance.

As the young women shifted towards discussing their aspirations for belonging, their definitions centered on the relationality of belonging. The definitions included: something between people; when you are able to be yourself and have self-worth; when you have a place where you feel safe and long to be; when you have control over your decisions; and when you are supportive and kind to others. From this shared starting point, the workshop focus shifted to self-understanding, because the young women felt that their identities were in tension between their self-definition and who they felt others wanted them to be. Self-reflection and awareness became important as a first step to opening other wider possibilities of change.

Figure 2: Relationships of belonging



Artwork by young woman aged 17

Resonating with Kistner's (2015) analysis of migrants in South Africa being situated in landscapes of trauma, for many young women in the group, past pains were a barrier to engaging with a wider sense of home, and making positive cultural, relational and place-based connections that could become a part of their present lives. As one young woman explained: "I need help in learning to express my feelings and to be able to speak about my life". Another young woman explained that, "I don't want my face to change, from happiness to sadness by looking back at the past". Visual and creative storytelling methods supported young people to regain a sense of control and to 'safely', and ethically connect with both past and present, and with each other. The facilitators developed a method that supported layers of private and public expression so that the young women could engage in uncensored preparatory work before choosing what they wanted to make public about their experiences. The young women created private 'My Belonging' books that provided space for freedom of self-expression, processing of difficult past experiences, and aspirations for what they wanted to know more about in their lives. The creation of an artefact (the book) aimed to bring a sense of ownership and continuity to the process, something that can feel disrupted in the lives of young migrants and young people in care (Ward 2011). The young women then engaged in group reflections and sharing circles where they chose what to share about the work that they had been doing, and had conversations about related social and political issues.

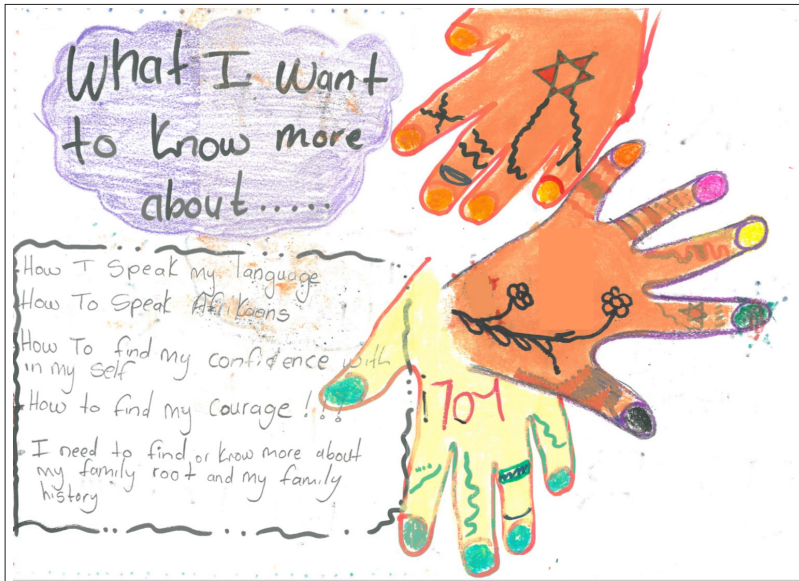
By starting to engage the self, young women were taking ownership of their identities, which was a response to their sense of fragmentation from their cultures and histories. In resonance with Probyn's idea of 'be-longing', being desires that come with the longing for something other than what you have (Probyn 1996: 5), the young women were supported to speak about what they "wanted to know more about" to build their sense of self and belonging, and why that was important to them. An example of this reflective work is shown in Figure 3.

This young woman's aspirations were connected to her desire to make sense of multiple life-worlds. She wanted to speak her own language, as well as Afrikaans, the language spoken by her South African peers at school, and by a number of the child and youth care workers; it is also the language which she was studying. She wanted to know more about her "family root(s)" and her "family history", and build a connection to that part of herself. She also expressed her desire to find confidence and courage. When this was discussed, she explained that this was in relation to being able to take the linguistic and cultural aspirations in the list forward.

Through the artwork, the young women were recalling parts of their identities and depicting the times when they were loved as a child, sister, grand-child, friend – these were identities that they felt they had lost as a result of their experiences. They were shifting their sense of self to becoming a young person who could build personal strength and positive relationships. An example of this is a 16-year-old young woman who used oil pastels to create an image of the bedroom she used to share

with her mother. She was on her own in South Africa as her mother had returned to her country of origin. She explained that, “this picture is about me and my mother and the bond that a daughter has (with her mother)”. This experience echoes another young woman’s reflection that through this process, “we have moved from what was lost, to feeling found”. Another young woman explained that, “I gained as a skill, learning to express myself in a positive way. I’ve learnt to speak and write about my feelings and I’ve learnt to accept life as it is and being positive”. This work was catalytic, a beginning rather than an end, and a contribution towards being able to bring positive connections with the past into the present (Bradbury and Clark 2012; Kistner 2015; Kohli 2011).

Figure 3: What I want to know more about



Artwork created by young woman aged 18

Building Relationships and Trust

For young people with backgrounds of migration a sense of safety within relationships has often been broken. This happens through diverse and complex experiences but has lasting effects on young people’s abilities to feel safe, stable and to trust (Korjonen-Kuusipuro et al. 2018). Issues and questions around trust, in particular around fear of judgment from others, existed within the group. To complement the above visual expressive modes, the idea of integrating a dance component into the program emerged. The young women responded positively to this artistic form of expression within a regular “girls’ group” that they participated in. The dance group was facilitated by a South African woman, a native of Cape Town, who had also

lived and worked abroad in the performance arts. The facilitator's understanding of the complex cultural and relational dynamics within this group of young women, informed by her own lived experience as a woman in South Africa, coupled with her experience as a dance facilitator, contributed to the creation of a sense of safety and trust in this process.

This set of relationships, experience and contextualized knowledge was brought into a partnership with evidence from the field of dance and movement therapy (Pierce 2014) including with refugees (Koch and Weidinger-von der Recke 2009; Verreault 2017). This research suggests that a movement-based process could strengthen a sense of safety and trust within the young women's relationships with themselves and in their relationships with each other. The method using art to give expression to feelings, was also particularly important given the emphasis on bodies, race and skin color within the xenophobic narratives of exclusion in South Africa. The facilitated workshops aimed to counter these narratives through building embodied connections to self and others. To support openness in self-expression, the program of dance and movement work was facilitated using the 5Rhythms approach (Roth 1997). This is a therapeutic practice structured through improvisational movement where participants explore the rhythms of flowing, chaos, staccato, lyrical and stillness, using their bodies. Within this structure, creative expression took place, particularly in relation to self-discovery and in working towards unity (Payne 2006).

Within this process, grounding exercises were used to encourage the young women to find healing in being connected to their bodies. Finding their own ways of expressing their bodies through movement helped address harmful communication strategies, where anger or aggression could dominate, and strengthened a sense of agency (Koch et al. 2012). Movement, connected to the different rhythms helped to bring about images and metaphors of symbolic expression around different emotions. Body-to-body relation through mirroring promoted the feeling of being validated by others, built empathy and countered assumptions that the young women had about the way that others in the group would treat them. Group-based movement created relational exchange between the young women and supported nonverbal dialogue that helped build trust. In response, one of the young women explained that, "I didn't have trust and it is hard to do the moves; trying to let go was hard. Trying to trust when you are unsure, is difficult. But, in the trust circle, they didn't let me fall". This validation within the group supported young women to reflect that they could be accepted when expressing themselves in their own ways, to build a positive relationship with their own bodies, and to have a sense of control in their lives (Bengtsson and Mølholt 2018; Kohli 2011). The artistic process included an activity where the young women collectively worked on a body map, shown in Figure 4. This exercise created a space for reflection and articulation of a shared sense of identity within the group.

Figure 4: Body map image of connections made through movement



Artwork created by the group of young women

As the artwork shows, this space gave the young women a platform from which to recognize and value their uniqueness as their beauty, to articulate the power that they have to fight for what they believe in, and to establish that others do not have the power to change who they are. This transition from personal expression in the visual storybook work, to nonverbal dialogue through movement, to a collective articulation of self and identity was a powerful way of building trust in others, to understand the connections between bodies, lived experiences and aspirations for change. The body map presents evidence concrete example of this important transition.

Creating Collective Power

The progression from personal to collective reflection illustrated the connection between a sense of self, and a sense of belonging in relation to others. Learning from the lived experiences of others, as a part of a collective can enable engagement with broader power relations that surround young people's lives, as well as understanding the lived reality of others. As the young people moved through the process, they articulated a desire to shift from reflecting inwardly, to narrating their identities outwardly, and shaping their place in the world (Arendt 1971). As a result, the next phase of the process built on the performance art of spoken word poetry. This layer of the project invited young people to engage as active witnesses to each other's expe-

riences and their quests for recognition, healing and autonomy (Prendergast 2015).

The spoken word process was facilitated by a Cape Town-born poet, raised on the Cape flats, an area of the city to which people of color were forcibly relocated under apartheid, and to which a strong history of activism is attached. With a background as a performance artist and cultural activist, her work as a youth facilitator connects the power of poetry to social transformation and integration. The process started with the young women writing “I” poems, which located themselves as the main actor, and agent of change within their poetry. Through sharing and reflection, the young women then worked in pairs, then small groups to start a process of reimagining shared identities and narratives in their lives, through the medium of poetry. In doing so the young women were encouraged to make personal connections to cultural references, symbols and icons, and their own lived experiences, to enable them to build new narratives about their lives (Antonsich 2010).

The process connected to the political ideology of spoken word poetry, which is a form of collective resistance for marginalized people – a refusal to accept stereotypes or imposed identities, rather, presenting a call for social justice (Stovall 2006). The work that the young people were engaged in, brought them together with others to find a way of speaking to the world, engaging with the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006). Importantly, this exercise was not about creating a simplistic narrative of who these young women are, but rather giving space to both their individual and collective identities. The poem shared here is the final version of the collective poem that all the young women in the group constructed together:

We are the start of a line that never ends

by Lawrence House young women’s group

I am flowing on the dark side of the moon
I am the smell of blood that shed many tears
I am the womb of a barren woman
I am the refugee that crawled through the dust of a thousand borders
I am the pencil that draws this story
The thief that stole the heart of the unknown

We are the start of a line that never ends
Generations wrought of earth’s womb
Diamonds risen from the bowels of an African tomb

I am the daughter of an African woman
The beat of my heart is the first drum
I am strong, I am feeling, I am love
I am fire
The light that brings everything to life

We are the start of a line that never ends
Generations wrought of earth's womb
Diamonds risen from the bowels of an African tomb
And so now in life's highs and lows my heart stays steady
In the spirit root of this family tree
Africa lives proud in me.

In writing this poem these young women were still grappling with what it means to belong, but rather than it being something out of reach, it was something, that together they started to articulate and to claim. They claimed it in re-writing themselves; they are strong, they are love, they are fire. At the same time, they retain the complexity, the confusion and the dark and light of their lived experiences. They recognize their strength and their agency in writing their own story and they recognize that they have the power to take hold of their belonging together, as African women.

Navigating Society

Drawing on critical and participatory pedagogy, the facilitators and Lawrence House staff were committed to the young people's engagement with the wider social realities and power relations that impact on their lives. Throughout the process it was evident that young migrants in care often felt that they were powerless to change what they know about who they are and their life stories. Furthermore, there was a strong sense of others having control over their lives. Up until this point the group space had been for young women only. Within the visual, movement-based and spoken word layers of the process the young people had started to explore the gendered power relations that shape belonging. Responding to this, the young women chose for the final layer of the process to be opened up to all young people at Lawrence House. Methodologically this also recognized the relational nature of gender, and the importance of seeing the interaction of norms around gender roles and responsibilities, and power in young people's lives (Gouws 2017). This also increased the number of young South Africans within the process, which also shifted the dynamics of learning towards understanding shared realities across perceived lines of difference. The young people's commitment to work together aimed at building respect for, and understanding the perspectives and ideas of others, countering experiences of unbelonging (Christensen 2009).

Throughout the process it became clear was evident that young people found value in self-expression through drama and performance. Dramatic expression appeared to be deeply enabling in terms of critical dialogue and reflective learning with others, as well as in 'rehearsing' change in their lives. Participatory theatre became the focus for engaging the young people in understanding the role of societal narratives in oppression and the reconstruction of self and agency. Given the emphasis on self-making and building collective community in this program, a strong col-

laboration was forged with a female European facilitator who lived in South Africa for an extended period, and whose doctoral work engaged critically with the construction of gendered identities in young South Africans' lives. Her methodology was informed by the principles of Paulo Freire's conscientization and Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed' that emphasized the use of physical and verbal expression in making visible social issues, deconstructing them and practicing transformation through performances. In response to the changing gendered make-up of the group, a local male co-facilitator with a background in youth work, was also invited to support the process.

The participatory theatre methodology constituted fictionalized stories based on young people's lived experiences which were able to support a sense of distance between emotionally and politically sensitive issues. The theatre work gave young people space to make visible silenced issues, and to engage with the sensitivity of the issue of belonging as it relates to norms and expectations around what belonging is, and for who (Yuval-Davis 2007). Young people were able to articulate the way violence, abuse and bullying impacted their capacity to belong. Additionally, that assumptions of the family being a safe and supportive place of belonging need to be challenged. Instead, new forms of relationships and sense of family need to be imagined. As Clark (2009) articulates, this created space for young people with migration backgrounds to speak out about who they are, who they can be, and in turn move towards the belonging they long for (Probyn 1996).

IMPLICATIONS FOR BUILDING BELONGING WITH YOUNG MIGRANTS IN CARE

The young people involved in this process have, through the embodied practice of making art, generated an understanding of belonging that is both relational and in process. Building belonging is therefore not about working towards a fixed outcome or identifiable end goal; it is a continuous process that is deeply interconnected with the changing dynamics of young people's lives. Young people are looking to build self-worth, feelings of safety, decision-making power and supportive relationships, in order to support their capacities to navigate these dynamics. This project's findings indicate that participatory arts methods can create a space for understanding and realizing belonging in young people's immediate lives, and contribute to the development of capacities for building belonging as young people construct their future, independent lives.

To nurture the relational dynamic of belonging, the process needed to engage with the role of trust in relationships and in building connections to others. Non-verbal expression in the form of movement and dance was a powerful way of young people finding new ways to trust and to share experiences as equals. Trust between the adult facilitators was supported by the commitment to the time and space needed for this process to grow in response to the unfolding aspirations of the young people involved. The creation of a safe space, was supported by long-term relationships be-

tween young people, and with facilitators, which help to (re)build trust that had been fractured through complex life experiences. The emphasis on trust draws visibility to the interaction with past experiences, of loss, violence and abandonment (Kistner 2015), and building present and future relationships that can establish connections to people and places (Antonsich 2010; Arendt 1971). Nurturing this trust, and trusting relationships with peers and adults in turn can contribute to the capacities of young people to build trust beyond the life-space of the participatory arts group.

Work on belonging is not easy; it is not a neutral issue for young people and involves emotional labor that needs to be continuously held and nurtured by the care network around the young person. Significantly, this project was supported by an organizational culture of young people's participation in their own development. Child and youth care workers and social workers were engaged from the outset and feedback loops were embedded so that young people were able to articulate the changes they were going through to their peers and care workers. Within this process, child and youth care workers indicated that an important lesson for their practice was that while legal documentation is critical for young migrants, it is not all that is needed for belonging. Social workers should continue to ensure documentation is realized, and at the same time, young people want to know more about their families, their communities, their language and their cultures. This research has shown that participatory arts processes can support young migrants to engage with these questions and work towards possibilities of realizing change.

The knowledge generated through this process provides rich and in-depth understanding of belonging in young migrants' lives, which has implications for the young people themselves, as well as for the practitioners and researchers engaged in their care. Reflective arts methods supported young people's self-understanding, enabling them to make sense of fractured pasts, in relation to how they were directing their lives in the present. Using a creative approach supported young people in recognizing the multiple forms of knowledge and identities that exist within them, and to reclaim this new knowledge. Visual storytelling created the space for narrative construction that recalled past strengths, including those pertaining to people, cultures and places, and to connect this to self-identification and determination within their futures (Bradbury and Clark 2012).

The transitioning from the personal to the collective level was also important for building understanding of self and other, and for developing new ways of seeing connections and relationships. This layered learning was supported by the emergence of a deep form of empathic listening that enabled an understanding of complexity and power-relations within the different young people's stories and experiences. This complexity helped build the potential for transformation as it created room for young people to construct new identities and belongings that embraced fluidity, multiplicity and change. This embracing of multiplicity has the potential to support them to make sense of their whole selves, without fear, shame or rejection of what had come before. It also supported their connection to each other, and fa-

cilitated the finding of linked social issues that led to their connection to a shared struggle, overcoming the isolation that can manifest through the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006). An important change seen in young people was reflected in the development of “non-oppressive identities” (Swartz and Soudien 2015: 35), made up of tolerance, acceptance and a rejection of discrimination.

The further development of this work with young migrants, together with young people marginalized within the care system more broadly, may create opportunities for young people to come together and learn across perceived lines of difference, building towards more inclusive societies. Additionally, by developing this work with other young people within the communities where these young people currently live, and will be transitioning into, it may become possible for young people to translate their knowledge into concrete action, and make meaningful connections with their future selves, and future lives (Korjonen-Kuusipuro et al. 2018).

CONCLUSION

This paper shared the reflections and insights of young migrants living in care in South Africa, on their search for belonging. The project grew from the perspectives of young migrants, and provides insight into methods using different art forms, that can contribute to their unique conceptualizations of belonging. The participatory approach supported the building of meaningful connections to self and others, which have the power to facilitate feelings of belonging across young people’s past, present and future lives. The building of belonging for these young people speaks to the unique realities of their past pains, and present insecurity in South Africa. The contextualized knowledge generated through an emergent, participatory arts process can help improve child and youth care practice by enhancing sensitivity and responsiveness to young people’s realities. This project has shown that efforts towards building belonging need to be continuous, they have to move through cycles of connecting young people to self, to others, and to society. Belonging is a process. Within a context of youth transitions, participatory arts can support young people to drive this process, and through this, they could reconceptualize and realize their sense of self, and sense of belonging, in the present, and importantly, in their futures.

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NOTE

The young people in this study have been anonymized throughout to protect their identities.

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