“Refugee” is not my Identity:

How NGOs Influence Displaced Youth’s Development of Belonging in the Netherlands

Hillary Weinberger (s1031957)
Radboud University, Nijmegen
Master’s Thesis: Human Geography
Conflict, Territories, and Identities
Supervisor: Joris Schapendonk
Year: 2020

Preface

In 2016 I spent some time volunteering at a refugee camp in Hungary, facilitating an art workshop for the children who were living there. It was one year after the 'European Refugee Crisis' and it was popular for 'voluntourists' from the United States of America to volunteer with refugees. At the time, I was working for an NGO that facilitated intercultural and international education experiences for high school students. We had developed a project for American high schoolers to spend two weeks in Hungary, learning about the refugee crisis and contributing, in recognizably small ways, to the reduction of that crisis. At the time, we struggled with our ethical responsibility to provide support to a vulnerable group without stirring up traumatic topics with them. We chose to facilitate an art workshop with the children living in the camp because, as this thesis addresses, it is important to provide spaces for minors to just be minors, especially when they have faced displacement and the cultural bereavement that comes with displacement. Even before I dove into the theory discussed in this thesis, I knew that it was important for children to have the spaces to play, explore, and have 'regular-kid' fun with no obligation to tell complicated stories about their trauma.

The introduction of this thesis starts with a description of my interaction with one of the participants I worked with at the refugee camp in Hungary, and how her two drawings, displayed on the front cover of this thesis, led to my understanding that even if we try to reduce the stress and trauma that youth face by providing the space for kids to be kids, the stress and trauma is still there, and it still needs to be addressed. As someone who is not qualified to work with trauma, I was interested in uncovering the ways that I could support this young artist and others like her without directly addressing their trauma. So as not to uncover the entire story that the introduction of this thesis details, I will only say here in this preface that my encounter in Hungary with the young artist led me to questions which ultimately resulted in the design of this research project, and my need to understand why it is important for NGOs to address the concept of belonging with displaced youth. This thesis was written so that NGOs can look at their work through the context of developing belonging and better understand what negotiations NGOs should further consider supporting as displaced youth develop belonging within their host countries.

In accordance, I want to thank that young artist, wherever in the world she is today, regardless of where or to whom she has tied her belonging. Without her, I may not have been introduced to the complex lifeworlds of displaced youth and my desire to support them in the ways that I am able. I thank

her for the gift of her two drawings, which hung in my office and inspired me each day that I sat down at the computer to write.

I would also like to thank each of my Interviewees who participated in this thesis, without whom I would not have been able to uncover the complex negotiations that displaced youth face. Their passion for the missions and the goals of their organizations is what gives me reassurance that this study has relevance. Their openness to sharing their own ideas, and their curiosity in my ideas, inspired a concise set of recommendations offered in the conclusion of this thesis. This thesis was written for them and their associates.

I give special thanks to my TeamUp Volunteer Coordinator, and my TeamUp facilitation team at the AZC in Nijmegen, who helped me to discover the inner workings and support of an excellent NGO that works hard to keep displaced youth safe and happy.

Thank you to my Thesis Supervisor, Professor Joris Schapendonk, for your critical and constructive feedback, and the time you dedicated to helping me make sure that this thesis could be the best it could be, especially under the bizarre circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you, Judit, for being my guide to a visual conceptual framework.

Thank you, Ilana, for having to finish first so that you were able to pass all your learned knowledge of nifty Microsoft Word tools on to me.

Last, but not least, thank you to the true first and second readers, my parents. Your continuous support and encouragement make the difference.

Executive Summary

This thesis seeks to understand how Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Netherlands can best support displaced youth developing belonging within their host country. In Human Geography and Migration studies, displacement is a process, condition, and category that influences how a person perceives their identity and their sense of where they belong in the world. In 2018, 23% of displaced people living in the Netherlands were minors, and this thesis takes special consideration of how developing belonging within a host country is an imperative part of the well-being of displaced youth. There are several NGOs in the Netherlands that dedicate their missions to the well-being of displaced youth. This thesis takes a psychological theory on understanding identity and looks at how various NGOs provide six different support programs to displaced youth. It examines how the NGOs perceive their participants developing belonging through four contexts: 1) Geographic influence on identity; 2) Communication, representation, and performance of identity; 3) Interpretation of identity by others; and 4) Negotiations of identity. The theoretical framework of this thesis conceptualizes belonging within these four contexts.

In analyzing the missions of each of these six NGO programs, what I found was that each of the programs addresses belonging both directly and indirectly within each of these four contexts of understanding identity, with a multitude of considerations and negotiations around developing belonging. Through direct observation of displaced youth and a series of in-depth and semi-structured interviews with NGO professionals providing support to displaced youth, this thesis determined that there are eight main groups of indicators that NGOs perceive influencing the negotiations of belonging that displaced youth face in the Netherlands. These indicators are: 1) Safety; 2) Home; 3) Place Attachments; 4) Family; 5) Language; 6) Social relationships and building community; 7) Racism, discrimination, and segregation; and 8) Political status. Looking at these indicators in isolation led to the understanding that these indicators are in fact incredibly intersectional. The ways in which NGOs perceive the intersectionality of displaced youth interacting with these indicators provides insight into the complex ways that displaced youth negotiate their belonging within their living spaces, at school, and in the greater Dutch communities.

Reviewing how NGOs perceive the negotiations that displaced youth face in each of the eight indicators led to my positions in three prominent debates concerning the negotiations of belonging for displaced youth, and how displaced youth can develop belonging within the Netherlands. The first debate looks at whether belonging is concerned with belonging to physical places, or to communities

within those places. This thesis contends that it is easier for displaced youth to first establish belonging within a community, and then they can establish belonging within the place. A second debate looks at whether belonging needs to be achieved by the individual seeking to develop it or granted by the community the individual is seeking belonging within. This thesis shows that it is often more important that belonging is first granted by the government of the host country, and then it can more comfortably be achieved within a community inside that host country. Belonging can be developed in the reverse order, however, in that case, displaced youth risk the chance of facing further cultural bereavement if they later become displaced from the Netherlands. The third debate this thesis considers is concerned with social capital, and whether it is more beneficial for displaced youth to build bonding social capital or bridging social capital to achieve belonging. This thesis concludes that building both bonding and bridging social capital will lead to optimal well-being and belonging for displaced youth within a host country. Bonding social capital is more easily built. Once bonded, it is easier to build bridging social capital as well.

The research in this thesis shows that developing belonging is a complicated and multifaceted process. Accordingly, I believe that it is imperative that displaced youth be provided support by a diverse set of NGOs that use different methods and address different themes that relate to the indicators that influence displaced youth's negotiations of belonging. There is no uniform way for NGOs to address or support displaced youth's development of belonging. Developing belonging is a multi-contextual and non-linear process that requires input from multiple sources in order to optimize belonging in all areas of life.

Lastly, this thesis posits that it is the responsibility of the NGOs working with displaced youth to encourage agency among their participants, as the leadership and empowerment aspects of agency can support the development of belonging in a multitude of contexts, regardless of processual complexities. In addition to NGO support programs, this thesis argues that researchers and policy makers should also consider the agency of displaced youth, for when they understand the needs of displaced youth and empower them to take action and achieve the goals that they set for themselves, youth have the opportunity to take charge over their own circumstances, and that is when belonging is most successfully developed.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

There would be no introduction to this thesis without my introduction to the two drawings displayed on the cover of this thesis, gifted to me by a displaced young girl. In 2016 I volunteered at a refugee camp in Hungary, facilitating an arts workshop for children. The artist was one of my participants, a 9-year-old girl from Afghanistan. She was not prompted to draw about her life experiences, and yet, she left me with these two very distinct drawings. The first, she described, was a drawing of her and her family running through the mountains at night, being chased by policemen with flashlights. The second drawing is of her and her family arriving to Europe on a boat. You can see that the first drawing is dark and somber, while the second displays much more color, and a happy sun.

The first time I looked at these two drawings side by side, I thought about the journeys that children face when they are displaced from their home country. I thought about how even though the artist introduced herself as being from Afghanistan, she presumably did not have happy memories of the country. Rather, through her second drawing, she displayed feelings of happiness and contentedness in Europe. I thought about the challenges she was likely to face while growing up, particularly as it related to negotiating her identity and place attachments. Was she always going to tell people she was from Afghanistan, or would she find a new home to identify with? Even if she did find a new home, would she always feel connected to Afghanistan? How would she negotiate her sense of self and belonging within a new place? Then I started to think about why it mattered that she needed to identify with just one place, or any place at all. Why could she not just belong, wherever she was, no matter the circumstances? Most importantly, what could I do to make it easier for displaced youth like the artist to develop a sense of belonging within their host countries?

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, n.d.) reports that there are currently 25.9 million refugees in the world. It is my understanding that the term ‘refugee’ is used here also to refer to ‘asylum seekers,’ displaced people who are seeking refugee status, but have not yet received it. This thesis concerns itself with both groups, asylum seekers and refugees. Therefore, unless specifically referencing refugees or asylum seekers, this thesis will use the term ‘displaced’ to describe the population of people it is researching. You will find in the analysis that many professionals who work with this group also use the term ‘newcomer.’

Federal governments all over Europe are struggling to determine the best ways to support displaced populations. The Dutch Government’s official position is that it wants to contribute to the safe reception of refugees, improving access to education, housing, public services, and a stimulating work

and income. The government also wants displaced people with intention and permission to settle in the Netherlands to integrate quickly (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). A number of Governmental organizations exist to implement the successful reception of displaced people and their first stages of integration, including the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), the Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V), and the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA). While these governmental organizations provide basic services and logistical support for displaced people of all ages entering the Netherlands, there is less governmental support for social and psychological challenges.

In 2018, 23% of refugees arriving to the Netherlands were minors (UNHCR, n.d.). Minors require different support than adults, particularly when they find themselves in sensitive and vulnerable situations. This thesis will focus on displaced minors, specifically youth between the ages of 6 and 17. Many displaced minors arrive in the Netherlands with trauma and a long list of losses that stem from the cultural bereavement they face after being displaced (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2008). As a result, they face the prominent struggle of understanding who they are, what their identity is, and where and how they are supposed to belong.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recalls that "in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance." It is in this light that a great number of Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) were developed to address the unique challenges that displaced youth face in their host countries, particularly the social and psychological challenges that government organizations largely ignore. Within the Netherlands, this list includes organizations like War Child and Stichting de Vrolijkheid. This thesis reviews an assortment of NGOs working with displaced youth to understand how each one addresses and helps facilitate belonging, as well as to understand what is missing in the support being provided, and how those gaps can be filled.

1.1 Research Objectives and Questions

Oliver Bakewell (2011) writes that "if we can do better at understanding the complex process of migration, the shifting conditions of displacement and their relationship with the categories that frame policy, we may be in a better position to recognize and facilitate new solutions to the problem of displacement" (pg. 26). This thesis seeks to understand how the development of belonging within a host country can help displaced youth overcome some of the challenges of their displacement. By gaining insight into the challenges and negotiations displaced youth face while developing belonging in the

context of NGO support programs within their host country, this thesis will make recommendations for how NGOs in the Netherlands can better facilitate support for the development of belonging. To achieve this, I will first seek to understand the importance of developing belonging within a host country. Then I will review how programs facilitated by NGOs in the Netherlands currently address issues around identity and belonging. Each NGO has a unique mission, set of goals, themes they address, and methods for facilitating support. It is important to understand how the diversity in programs helps displaced youth negotiate their belonging. I will consider several indicators that influence negotiations of belonging to understand the challenges that displaced youth face. Lastly, I will seek to understand the importance of encouraging agency among displaced youth to discover how NGO programs can better support the development of belonging.

The main research question that this thesis seeks to answer is the following:

How can Non-governmental Organizations in the Netherlands best facilitate the development of belonging for displaced youth?

The relevant sub questions are as follows:

- What are Non-governmental Organizations in the Netherlands already doing to support displaced youth developing belonging?
- What are the negotiations that Non-governmental Organizations perceive displaced youth considering when they are developing belonging?
- What is the significance of Non-governmental Organizations encouraging agency among displaced youth?

1.2 Societal Relevance

Abraham Maslow (1943), a prominent psychologist who created the theory of psychological health known as Maslow's Hierarchy, believes that belonging is an essential and prerequisite human need that has to be met before you can achieve self-worth. Humans, no matter their age, thrive when they feel like they belong (Lems, 2016). Humans are social beings and we are drawn to identify ourselves with groups. In social sciences, groups are defined as two or more people who interact with one another, share similar characteristics, and collectively have a sense of unity (Turner, 1982).

Characteristics may include, but are not limited to, interests, values, ethnic or social background, and kinship ties. People can identify with and feel like they belong to multiple groups across multiple spaces and networks. Regardless of the location and quantity, when people feel like they belong, they are more likely to be happy and successful (Maslow, 1943). This is the same for children and youth. Researchers in Human Geography also write about how it is imperative, particularly for minors who have been displaced from their home country and have migrated to a new society, to find that sense of belonging so that they can find happiness and success along with their peers (Wernesjö, 2012). When refugees find themselves in comfortable, accepting positions with prospects for happiness and success, they are more likely to integrate (Sirriyah, 2010; Kibreab, 1999).

The Netherlands is considered a Welfare State, providing systems of assistance that help refugees achieve successful settlement and integration as they make their new home (Korac, 2003). Maggie O'Neill and Tony Spybey (2003) believe that the objectives of social policy should be to provide refugees tools for integration. However, integration is a loaded and very debated concept both within the migration and refugee studies fields, as well as in refugee policy. Understanding what integration really means, and how people are supposed to achieve it is multifaceted. Alastair Ager and Alison Strang (2008) discuss four key domains that they believe define successful integration:

1. Markers and Means: achievements and access across sectors of employment, housing, education, and health.
2. Foundation: assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights.
3. Social Connection: process of social connection within and between groups within a community.
4. Facilitators: structural barriers to connection related to language, culture, and local environment.

This thesis concerns itself with the latter two domains, as these domains are intertwined with the development of belonging. It is within these domains that we understand how developing belonging is essential for successful integration.

The struggle of negotiating integration and belonging within the Netherlands begins when asylum seekers first arrive to the country and are given shelter at an Asylum Seeker Center (AZC). For many, the AZC will be considered their home for an indefinite amount of time. Living in the AZC, however, can be an isolating experience. Residents of AZCs rarely have opportunities to interact with the communities outside the AZC, especially depending on the location of the AZC they are placed in. Before official refugee status is granted, asylum seekers are meant to learn the Dutch language. However, other than mandatory languages classes for minors, there are few other Government

established programs in place to help develop integration into Dutch society. Once a displaced person is granted refugee status, they are required to integrate in a way where they must assume Dutch culture to fully settle. The Dutch system makes speaking the language and having ties to locals essential for the integration process. This creates an atmosphere where Dutch culture is seen as superior, and identity becomes hierarchical (Korac, 2003). Refugees in the Netherlands do not feel like they can integrate because the welfare system does not provide them with strategies for building "bridging social capital" (Putnam, 2000), which would provide them with a sense of rootedness and social inclusion (Korac, 2003). In non-welfare states where refugees need to actively work for their stability and secure their own shelters, they are somewhat forced to establish connections and social ties with locals. Encounters within their new society are spontaneous and individualized, so the perception of identity as being hierarchical is avoided (ibid) and bridging social capital can be achieved.

In a welfare state like the Netherlands, the encouragement and facilitation of integration falls to NGOs who develop programs designed to support the unique challenges that displaced people face under the circumstances of their migration and resettlement. Most NGOs focus on the populations living within the AZCs in order to combat the isolating nature of life in an AZC. Therefore, with the help of NGOs, the integration process starts within the AZC, and often before refugee status is obtained.

There is a concern that in stages of uncertainty while living at the AZC, before any status guarantee has been made and there is still possibility for youth to either be sent back to the home country or back to a previous host country, developing belonging within the Netherlands can, in fact, be detrimental. While I did not have the capacity to tackle this concern within the scope of this thesis, my research will seek to determine how the various NGOs working with youth in the AZCs address issues of belonging with their participants, directly and indirectly. Keeping in mind strategies for developing belonging proposed by various researchers (Wernesjö, 2012; Sirriyeh, 2012; Kibreab, 1999), I will consider how NGOs can most effectively support displaced youth in developing belonging within the Netherlands. In my conclusion, I will make recommendations for improvements to these strategies.

1.3 Scientific Relevance

There is a fair amount of research in the field of Human Geography that reviews refugee policies, the effects of displacement and migration on refugees, and the challenges that they face (Doppen, 2010; Kibreab, 1999; Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010). There is even a growing amount of research that focuses on displaced youth, specifically (Allsopp & Chase, 2019; Hopkins & Hill, 2010;

Wernesjö, 2014). This thesis focuses on displaced youth and looks at existing literature on the use of terms like 'displacement,' 'migrant,' and 'refugee,' as well as concepts around forced migration and transnationalism. However, instead of using these terms to understand policy, I look at how these terms affect displaced youth personally, particularly as they negotiate understanding their identity and sense of belonging in the context of having to settle in a new country.

The refugee label defines the human experience of a category of people (O'Neill & Spybey, 2003). There are some scholars who believe that using the 'othering' term of 'refugee' to refer to minors is risky and alienating. For example, Wernesjö (2012) believes that the pathologizing of refugee youth as a category of greater risk in comparison to other children can cause the development of emotional problems, heightened racism, and social exclusion, which affect the well-being of children. I do not dispute this. However, Bakewell (2011) writes that 'only by naming them as being a 'category of concern' will it be possible to ensure that their needs are met and their rights are respected, alongside those of the rest of the population" (pg. 15). It is in line with this belief that this thesis has chosen to use the term 'displaced youth' in order to keep the distinction while removing some of the stigma that comes with the word 'refugee.' It thus moves forward with a focus on understanding how NGOs witness and support the conceptualization of identities and belonging for displaced youth, and how NGOs can help reduce the effects of the 'othering' that Wernesjö (2012) describes.

Wernesjö (2012) writes about the central themes in the lifeworlds of unaccompanied minors, developing strategies for them to cope with the trauma, loss and identity confusion that comes along with displacement and migration. At the end of her 2012 article on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children she specifically makes a request for more research to be done on the concept of belonging, and how developing a sense of belonging can help displaced children and youth, both unaccompanied and accompanied, settle in their host communities. In todays globalized world, displaced children struggle to determine their identities and sense of belonging (Wilding, 2012).

The concept of belonging is central to this thesis, and I believe it should be a prominent theme in programs designed to support displaced youth. In consideration of how NGOs can best support the negotiations that displaced youth face while developing belonging in the Netherlands, this research will focus on three main conceptual debates that already exist in Human Geography and Migration studies. The first is whether the concept of belonging is tied to physical place, or to community (Brun, 2001; Gustafson, 2001; Kibreab, 1999; Sirriyah, 2010; Wilding, 2012). The second is whether belonging is sought after, or whether it needs to be granted (Yuval-Davis, 2011; see also Kohli, 2011; Lems, 2016).

The third is whether a sense of belonging can be best achieved with bonding social capital or bridging social capital (Elliott and Yusuf, 2014; Korac, 2003).

These debates are multilayered, complex, and influenced by many systems (political, social, psychological, economic, etc.). Therefore, research conducted on these subjects should be multidisciplinary (Bakewell, 2011). My research will navigate two different fields that relate to displaced people and belonging; it will take Hopkins' (2013) psychological theory of understanding identity and belonging and tie it to Human Geography and migration studies theoretical understandings of 'belonging' and how the concept intersects with that of 'displacement'.

Much of society, and even the NGOs providing support, see refugee minors as victims of their circumstances. The academic field of Child Geography is calling for the involvement of children and youth when it comes to making decisions about spaces for children and youth (Matthews & Limb, 1999). Lems, et al (2019) write about how agency can be effectively exercised alongside victimhood to empower displaced youth. With a focus on the leadership and empowerment aspects of agency, and discussing the importance of a feedback loop so that NGOs can directly address the desires of displaced youth, this thesis adds support to the debates in Child Geography about the importance of implementing Progressive Participation of Children in conversations about developing spaces and policies for children (Matthews & Limb, 1999). As Lems (2016) believes herself, we need more research from the refugee perspective, as they should contribute to defining, facilitating, and assessing integration. While this thesis was ultimately not able to incorporate refugee perspectives, it does seek to highlight the importance of considering them by investigating how NGOs encourage the leadership and empowerment aspects of agency among displaced youth. Overall, this thesis is dedicated to deciphering what it means to belong somewhere, and how NGOs can help displaced youth achieve belonging somewhere, regardless of where they originally came from.

Chapter 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This thesis is largely concerned with the concept of belonging, as it relates to displaced youth. Displaced people are often seen as homeless, boundless. Other terms often used to refer to displaced people are 'asylum seekers,' who by name are indefinitely seeking somewhere else to be, and 'refugee,' which is the status given to a person who has been granted asylum in a host country. However, the term 'refugee' still implies non-belonging (Wernesjö, 2015). The use of the terms 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee' neglect the actual experiences and lives of the people these terms are used to describe. The negotiation of a displaced person's identity and where any person is meant to belong is a complicated one. Therefore, this chapter will review current literature and debates around the concepts of displacement, transitional identities, belonging, and agency.

2.1 Displacement

What does it mean to be a displaced person? As Lems (2016) points out, the word 'placement' exists within the word 'displacement.' Therefore, the word implies an assumption that all human populations belong in a certain place, and in an ideal world, people would stay where they belong (Turton, 1996). I do not support this assumption, but it does help us understand the reality of displaced people. To be displaced is to exist as an 'other' in a place which is not the one where you 'belong.' The key variable which determines how people perceive displacement is dependent on the conditions under which they leave the place of origin, and the treatment they receive when they arrive in their host country (Kibreab, 1999). The sensitive state of displacement brings up many debates on the concept of 'home.' Searching for home is a prominent dimension of displacement. Therefore, this section will be broken up in to three sub-sections. The first will briefly discuss the original conditions that cause displacement. The second will explore displacement as a geographical and existential concept. The third will explore debates on how displaced people conceptualize home.

2.1.1 Conditions of Displacement

Many displaced people are involuntarily displaced because the people or group asserting control of a particular geographic area do not want them living there, most often due to ethnic, racial, or religious 'otherness' (Kibreab, 1999). Involuntarily displaced groups often stay within the region, with

the hope of one day returning to their homes. However, having a well-founded fear of persecution due to this otherness in a home country is what makes someone eligible to seek asylum elsewhere (Kohli, 2011). Many displaced people leave their community because they face discrimination and violence in their homes, and they are making the choice to seek a safer, 'better' life elsewhere. This category of displaced person will more often leave their home region, cross international borders, and seek refuge within another nation. It is this category of displaced people that are still migrating to Europe in rapid numbers, seeking shelter and sanctuary, and thus, asylum. However, seeking asylum is not just about seeking shelter and sanctuary, as displacement is not just about being removed from a place.

2.1.2 Geographical vs. Existential Displacement

Oliver Bakewell (2011) argues that there are three different senses in which the term displacement can be used: process, condition, and category. In the process sense, displacement brings about a physical change in location; it is simply geographical. In the conditional sense, displacement is a state of being, and the outcome of the geographical process. In this sense, displacement is more existential, and therefore a bit more complicated. In process, displacement ends when you find a place to settle. However, displacement is an ongoing condition concerned with the separation from 'home,' and not being where one might want to be. In fact, Bakewell (ibid) argues that it is possible for people to be born into the condition of displacement, even if they have never moved, as the feeling of lacking a home can be passed through generations. It is through this sense that we understand how displacement can often remove a person from their sense of self (Lems, 2016). The condition of displacement is a self-perception and is not imposed on a person the way the process can be. As a condition, displacement can be reversed. It ends when people regain their sense of home and become 'emplaced,' implying a conceptual move away from place as location and toward place as a process of socio-affective attachment (Vigh & Bjarnesen, 2016). Emplacement can occur either by returning to the place of origin, or by establishing a new home elsewhere (Hammond, 2004). Returning, therefore, is about returning to yourself, which can be done in any place, as long as you can restore your sense of identity there (Lems, 2016).

The third sense of displacement is categorical. In this sense, displacement is an assigned criterion established by others in social science and social policy as a way to identify a group of people through their shared features (Bakewell, 2011). This helps determine who should be subjected to which outcomes of policy. NGOs focus their attention on particular groups of people that fall within their

mandate, so they need to be able to distinguish who are the right people they should be working with. “This distinction is hard to maintain. As a result, most agencies end up working with a system of bureaucratic labeling based on stereotypical identities and sets of assumed needs” (ibid: pg. 24). For most NGOs supporting displaced youth who are seeking asylum, seeking asylum is about needing to be provided with shelter and sanctuary. What is often not considered at the forefront is that shelter and sanctuary should be provided within a place that can also be identified as a new home; a place where one can restore their sense of self and identity. After all, feeling at home is a practical necessity of critical and existential importance (Lems, 2016).

This thesis seeks to analyze how NGOs can help facilitate ‘feeling at home,’ through supporting the development of belonging. The following section will further explore the meanings and significance of home to displaced people, so that we can begin to understand why it is important for displaced people to establish belonging in a host country.

2.1.3 Searching for Home: Roots vs. Routes

The primary concern for displaced people is to find a place where they are safe and can work towards a better life (Kibreab, 1999). They leave their native homes with determination to find a new place to call home. Home has therefore become a fluid process reconstructed by mobility and place. It is somewhere an individual can develop ‘place attachment;’ forming affective, cognitive, behavioral bonds between individuals or groups and one or several places (Gustafson, 2001). It is a place where an individual can self-identify, and also a place other people associate with you, where others recognize that you belong (Sirriyeh, 2010). There is a debate in transnational migration literature about whether place attachments and identifications are rooted or routed. Post-modernist debate and sedentarist thinking assumes the existence of a natural connection between people and their place of origin, suggesting that place attachment is rooted (Kibreab, 1999). However, both Gustafson (2001) and Sirriyeh (2010) believe that there has been a shift in focus from roots of home (signifying emotional bonds with the physical environment and local community) to routes of home (bonds with a collection of places reflective of the individual life path). Both asylum seekers and refugees, who are migrants and transnational people, have physically connected through many different places along their journey where significant experiences have occurred. Finding a home is about deciphering the routes and locating the right place of belonging based on those experiences. In other words, home is where identities can be derived from the traditions and relationships that you carry with you to a place where

customs and practices from the past can be comfortably used (Kibreab, 1999; Kohli, 2011). Home is not the physical place itself.

Different aspects of home can often conflict with each other. For example, for many people, home is about safety and about family. Often, displaced individuals will find that they can only achieve one at the expense of the other; they must leave behind their family to reach safety (Sirriyeh, 2010). This process of migration causes the individual to face cultural bereavement (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2008), which refers to the loss of home, parents and siblings, friends, social networks, familiar environment, school, belongings, culture, social status, way of living, usual patterns of family life, customs and habits, future perspectives, etcetera, as well as loss of self-identification, social isolation, and loss of the sense of security and well-being (ibid). It is easy to see how a laundry list of losses and having no place in a community can lead to anxiety, depression, and a host of other psychological and societal challenges (ibid). These challenges can often lead to the desire to return home.

A lot of migration studies research on displaced people discusses the desire that displaced people can have to return home. As Lems (2016) previously described, returning home can also be about restoring your own sense of self wherever you are. She writes that "nostalgia for home is not about wanting to go back, but about the desire to promote the feeling of being there, here" (ibid: pg. 331). The 'here' that she speaks of is the host country of a displaced person; the new place they have been routed to build a new home. Vigh and Bjarnesen (2016) also support the idea that the desire to return home can often be fulfilled without having to physically return to a home country, considering their theory on emplacement is not a question of physical localization, "…but a striving toward being positively situated in a relational landscape" (ibid: pg. 10). One must find their value within a new place. This is more easily achieved when individuals are not overwhelmed with feelings of cultural bereavement. Creating links to the home country from the host country can help one overcome this obstacle. Participating in activities that bring comfort, particularly activities that allow one to connect with cultural aspects of their home country in their host country, such as eating traditional foods, listening to traditional music, using native language with others in the host country, or practicing religion can help transfer the feelings of home from the home country to the host country (Kohli, 2011).

Establishing home in a host country is known by most researchers and policy makers as 'settlement' or 'integration.' When a displaced person is granted refugee status in a welfare state, certain protections are implied. This includes access to social services that facilitate settlement in a host country (Korac, 2003). According to Kohli (2011), there are three dimensions that act as a foundation for stable settlement of refugees: Safety, Belonging, and Success. He goes a step further by outlining four

specific settlement needs; 1) A safe and supportive place to live; 2) Continuities with past relationships and customs, as well as opportunities to create new ones; 3) Access to purposeful education and training; and 4) Opportunities to move forward from trauma and find new purpose in everyday routines (ibid: pg. 315). Lems (2016) adds that feeling a part of something helps avoid loneliness and homesickness and is essential to successful settlement in a new home.

Home and belonging are concepts that are often used together (Wernesjö, 2014). All people, displaced or not, suggest that they feel at home when they can develop feelings of safety and belonging within a space, when they know the local language, and when they have cultural knowledge of the community they are building a home in (Ager & Strang, 2008). This includes when they can be recognized and greeted by neighbors, and when small acts of friendship have a disproportionately positive impact on an individual's perceptions of their place. Particularly for displaced people, friendliness helps them feel secure and welcomed in their host community (ibid). An individual can claim belonging in a place, emotionally, but claims can be challenged and denied by others which can make one feel less at home (Wernesjö, 2015). As belonging is a central theme of this thesis, there will be a later section dedicated to the complicated understanding of belonging, what it means, and how to achieve it.

To round off this section on searching for home, it is important to emphasize that settling into a new home first requires an individual to maintain their sense of self, no matter the physical location that they are in. It is possible to maintain your sense of self and develop a sense of inclusion within your host society. While Korac (2003) writes that inclusion is largely dependent on how your host society receives you, Lems (2016) believes that we have the agency to give meaning to the places we are in and create our own sense of inclusion. A balance of the two should exist, though the host societies general attitudes toward displaced people can make a big difference. Feeling included is equal to feeling like you belong. However, the development of home and successful settlement in a host country does not guarantee belonging (Korac, 2003). The following two sections of this chapter will further review the relevance of this statement and help us understand the specific challenges that NGOs perceive displaced youth facing while trying to establish a sense of belonging in the host country.

2.2 Transitional Identities

It is important to remember that refugee is not a homogeneous identity. There are multiple identities within the refugee category; multiple languages spoken, multiple sets of traditions practiced,

different needs depending on the home country, and even then on which community they identify/identified with while in the home country (O'Neill & Spybey, 2003). Additionally, difference within the refugee category is caused by gender, socio-economic background, and age (Korac, 2003). Being identified as a refugee youth is an insecure identity, as it is transitional and unintegrated, simply based on the words being used to identify them. Both 'youth' and 'refugee' are transitional identities independently; neither identity has arrived at a state of being, as both are a state of becoming (Wilding, 2012). A youth is becoming an adult but is not yet there. A refugee, or displaced person, is transitioning their residency and/or citizenship but have not necessarily yet received their new status. These states of transition often cause displaced youth to have a lot of insecurities about their futures.

In accordance with such insecurities, and in line with Kohli's (2011) three dimensions for stable settlement of all refugees, the UNHCR (1989) defines four key recovery goals specifically for refugee youth: 1) restoring safety; 2) restoring attachment and social connections; 3) restoring meaning in life; and 4) restoring dignity (Sampson & Gifford, 2010). In the Netherlands, safety is often assumed, at least temporarily, through living in an AZC. Emotional and social restorations are achieved through positive place making (ibid), which goes hand in hand with developing belonging within a new place. However, displaced identity pre refugee status often leaves youth insecure about their futures. This makes it difficult for youth to have anything but ambivalence when it comes to developing place attachment, or especially social attachments within their host community (ibid).

Allsopp and Chase (2019) write that the well-being of young people has become attached to their future selves. When a child living in a host country develops aspirations and dreams, they rely on the social context in which those dreams were developed in order to perceive achieving them. They therefore become dependent on membership within host communities if they are going to achieve their future selves. Social membership is the de facto belonging which people develop through time spent and ties developed in the host country. Developing social membership is especially acute during childhood (ibid), thus the importance of NGOs focusing on the well-being of youth.

While the transitional stage of 'youth' sets my target group apart from other 'refugees' and displaced people, the greater relevance to my research is how the term 'refugee' is ambiguous. It suggests that there is a self vs. an 'other'; inclusion vs. exclusion; and belonging vs. not belonging (Lems, et al, 2019). Lems, et al (ibid) write that categories such as 'refugee', 'migrant', and 'unaccompanied minor' do not capture the realities of the individuals that they are used to identify. They are bureaucratic labels used to explain the exclusion of a particular group from the rest of society. Kohli (2011) agrees that the labels are circumstantial, describing only one circumstance of an individual's

reality, and that they should be temporary. He believes that when people, even youth, are given the agency to move freely and be in charge of their own circumstances, they shed the label of refugee, and that is when they belong. The concept of agency will be discussed further in the last section of this chapter. Before we can get to agency, we must first tackle the concept of belonging.

2.3 Belonging

So far, this framework has built an understanding for who displaced people are, and the complexities involved with displaced people establishing new homes in host countries. We have also developed an understanding of who displaced youth are, and why they are unique subjects. Now it is important to understand how displaced youth negotiate the concept of belonging, and why it is important for them to develop belonging within the Netherlands.

Like the terms 'refugee' and 'youth,' the term 'belonging' and the experience of belonging is best understood as a transitional process. Belonging is the process of becoming, rather than a state of being (Spaaij, 2015). Belonging is dynamic, and situational. It can shift over time, be contested, be plural. Also like the term 'refugee,' belonging is intersectional, and we must remember that it can include multiple social categories of race, ethnicity, gender, kinship, religion, class, and nation (ibid).

Developing a sense of belonging is closely tied to the understanding of one's own identity. Identity is how we understand who we are and who others are. It implies sameness, and difference. It is intersectional; it can change, transform, or not, in different contextual places and times (Hopkins, 2013). It is both personal and social. Individuals will often align their identities with groups or places where they can experience belonging. This takes us back to the discussion that Gustafson (2001) and Sirriyeh (2010) facilitate about place attachment. People form bonds with the groups and places with which they can identify, as well as with the groups and places that others see us as belonging with. A specific religious identity can lead to the belonging within a corresponding religious community. Identifying with a specific gender or sexuality can lead to belonging within a corresponding community. People want to socially and spatially belong among others with whom they can identify. Therefore, to understand belonging, we must first understand identity.

Hopkins (2013) says that to understand identity, we must:

1. Understand how geographical context shapes it
2. Understand how people communicate their own identity
3. Understand how identity is represented or performed

4. Understand how identity is interpreted by others
5. Understand how identity is negotiated (challenged, resisted, etc.)

Researchers in the field of Human Geography and Migration Studies have reported on how belonging can also be understood within these 5 points that Hopkins identifies. Therefore, these five goals for understanding identity have been used as a foundation for how this thesis researches and analyses the ways NGOs perceive displaced youth's negotiations of identity and belonging. Through the following sub-sections, we will take a closer look at how various researchers address each of these points. I will combine the second and third points into the same, as I understand representation and performance to be a communication style for how both identity and belonging can be communicated. At the end of this review, Hopkins' points will present to us how belonging is a dialectic of seeking belonging, and being granted belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

2.3.1 Geographical Context

Belonging, like home, is often associated in research with space or place. Autobiographical Insideness is the extent to which you are attached to a place that is important to you because of specific events you experienced there – school, love, death, etc (Rowles, 1983). People become attached to places because of their attachment to the people within those places, and the specific events and experiences that overlap in the mythico-histories of people who identify with each other (Malkki, 1995).

Catherine Brun (2001) uses the term 'reterritorialization' to describe how displaced people establish new or expanded networks and cultural practices that define new spaces for daily life. In other words, it is a way for us to understand the spatial strategies that displaced people develop for negotiating the place that they are physically present in, while also negotiating social, economic, and emotional relationships from the places they are absent from (Sampson & Gifford, 2010). Displaced youth particularly face a dilemma in balancing between integration into their host society, and disintegration form their past society (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2008).

In a globalized and digitized world, the media, and particularly social media, have become the facilitators of a more flexible mode of belonging, even across fragmented migration (Wilding, 2012). This global surge in mobility and migration has led to a deterritorialized global world where individuals, and especially displaced youth, are able to assume deterritorialized identity (Kibreab, 1999). Belonging no longer requires obedience to geographic boundaries, and in fact, relationships and individual experiences are becoming specifically disassociated from place (Gustafson, 2001). An entire world of

communities exists virtually. Displaced youth are maintaining online communities, which can interrupt engagement with local, offline communities (Wilding, 2012). Connection to an ethnic community online and connection to the host country do not have to be in opposition. I believe that reterritorialization describes this experience. We should be able to find ways where refugee youth can maintain a sense of belonging within their ethnic community, on or offline, as well as with the host community in which they live.

2.3.2 Communication, Representation and Performance

The specific conditions and qualities of places become significant when we attach meaning to them. However, meaning is also derived from the social networks and activities that are available for people to engage with (Wernesjö, 2014). It is through engagement within a place that displaced youth communicate, represent, and perform their identities.

Identity is often communicated through the process of 'placemaking' (Pemberton & Phillimore, 2018). People project their identity within a community through the use of language and the establishment of ethnic restaurants and shops that others can associate with collective identities. This is in line with Wernesjö's (2014) clear understanding of belonging being communicated through familiar traditions, language, food, and music. In other words, people communicate and perform their identity and belonging by participating in activities that bring comfort (Kohli, 2011).

Youth find comfort in spaces where they can participate in familiar activities, such as pursuing education, playing games and sports, watching TV and movies, and playing on the computer (Sampson & Gifford, 2010). Therefore, along with parks and libraries, schools are often the places that provide a welcome atmosphere with opportunities for youth to develop belonging in their early stages of settlement (ibid). In fact, Sirriyeh (2010) believes that education is one of the most important institutions and social experiences that can help displaced youth feel normal among their peers. Youth need to join with others, form attachments, make commitments, and find their place within a school environment, whether it is with displaced peers, or locals (Kohli, 2011). Friendships legitimize an individual as a member of a social group and can greatly help displaced youth feel secure in their new place (Sirriyah, 2010).

When displaced youth can actively carve themselves a place in their new community by being active participants and befriending people, they include themselves, and develop belonging (Lems, 2016). Having a project that you work on together with your community members can make a

difference and help displaced youth see themselves as belonging to something wider (ibid). Finding a community of your own people in a new place is still belonging to the new place (ibid). “Knowing the place, knowing the people living there, and maintaining good relations with neighbors and other local residents is important” (Gustafson, 2001: pg. 672). According to Wernesjö (2014), social relations that seem to be the most important to displaced youth, contributing to feelings of belonging, are those established between same age and gendered youth encountered during the migration and settlement process.

2.3.3 Interpretation by Others

Developing a sense of belonging is not all dependent on the individual and their experience, particularly since emphasis is placed on relationships with others. In large part, belonging also depends on the people around you and how they are willing to facilitate a welcoming and accepting experience into the host community. Korac (2003) writes that belonging is about finding commonalities with others. That being said, “belonging is…not only a question of similarity within a collectivity. Just as important, it is about drawing boundaries based on differences to others” (Wernesjö, 2014: pg. 36).

It is not easy to develop a sense of belonging in a new place, particularly when you have experienced the hardships that come along with being displaced. Sirriyeh (2010) writes that citizenship defines the boundaries of who is at home and who is not; who is included and who is excluded. As discussed in the previous section on the concept of home, most nations, including the Netherlands, have implemented policies and social understandings that fall in line with this idea (Doppen, 2010; Korac, 2003). For newcomers, especially displaced newcomers, it is extremely difficult to gain membership within the ‘in group’ unless you share the values and community cohesion of the host community. Central themes in the lifeworlds of unaccompanied minors are loss, separation, and trauma (Wernesjö, 2012). When they arrive in a new place, they face uncertainty, social isolation, language difficulties, to name a few prominent examples. The section on the concept of home also discussed how many governments are implementing policies that segregate and discriminate against immigrants and displaced asylum seekers and refugees, preventing them from incorporating themselves into society, deepening the uncertainty and other challenges mentioned above. However, strict immigration and refugee policies are not the only challenges displaced youth face when it comes to their belonging being dependent on how others perceive and interpret their identities.

Displaced youth face racism and discrimination in host communities. They are often viewed by locals as having a higher potential to be criminals, drug addicts, or terrorists. Locals believe that "because of 'uprootedness' and 'deterritorialization', displaced people have lost their identity, their value system and their culture. All these elements contribute to the fact that they become an 'uncontrollable', 'irresponsible' and even 'pathological' element in the host society," with an incapability of being loyal citizens (Binder & Tošić, 2005: pg. 611). These are harder concepts to combat. When displaced youth experience discrimination in their host country simply based on their identity, they will often actively try to hide the aspects of their identity that have them under scrutiny, and try to blend in (Kibreab, 1999). Alternatively, the racism and social exclusion that they face may cause them to self-segregate with displaced peers, because self-segregation is often the easiest way to avoid harassment (Amin, 2002).

2.3.4 Negotiation

While it can be a challenge, over time, and through increased interaction within a place, one can develop belonging by becoming part of the social fabric of a place (Wernesjö, 2015). The social fabric of a place can be incredibly dynamic, negotiated through both close and distant social relationships. We are thus presented with a new debate around the concept of belonging: as displaced people build homes in host communities, is developing belonging within that space about finding your ethnic community within that space, or is it about building relationships and belonging with the local community in that space? In other words, is it enough for the displaced youth living in the Netherlands to build a community with their peers living in the AZC in order to feel like they belong in the Netherlands, or should they develop belonging with Dutch people? How do they negotiate belonging in these two contexts?

This is where the concept of social capital comes back in to play (Putnam, 2000). Social capital is the relationship between people and their social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness among shared networks (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014). This thesis considers two main types of social capital: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital highlights the importance of common identity. Within this research, this includes common cultural practices, shared language, and shared settlement and integration experiences with fellow AZC residents. With bonding social capital, displaced communities can develop belonging among each other, regardless of the circumstances of the host community. On the other hand, bridging social capital highlights the

importance of building connections with local groups within the host community in order to achieve belonging. This thesis discusses social capital in the context of the debate on which type of social capital is more useful to the displaced youth developing belonging, and whether it is possible to achieve both types. It also seeks to understand how NGOs facilitate the building of social capital.

In the scientific debate on social capital that this thesis considers, Korac (2003) concludes that bridging social capital is the most necessary approach for facilitating the positive settlement, integration, and development of belonging amongst displaced youth in their host country. Putnam (2000) also highlights a greater significance in bridging social capital when he says, "bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves" (pg. 23). However, Elliott and Yusuf (2014) write that most studies they have encountered find a higher reporting of bonding social capital among displaced populations rather than bridging (Kenny, et al, 2005), assuming that displaced people are more inclined to focus on building bonding social capital, or at least that it is easier to do so. That being said, another study by Peter Nannestad, et al (2008) shows a positive relationship between levels of bridging and bonding social capital. Even though bonding social capital is more commonly reported among refugee communities, it does not prevent displaced groups from developing bridging social capital. Elliott and Yusuf (2014) write that "emphasizing bridging and bonding social capital allows for an analysis of the challenges of resettlement for refugees; the balance between adapting to life in a new setting whilst paying homage to one's homeland" (pg. 104). In other words, displaced people seek to develop belonging by building bridging social capital, but they maintain bonding social capital as well, as this is how they maintain their native culture (Korac, 2003).

It is difficult to study belonging with children facing the amount of uncertainty that displaced youth in the Netherlands do (Wernesjö, 2014). Immigration status, community demography, length of stay, and experiences before arriving in the host country are all examples of differentiating circumstances that affect the nature of social capital within a community (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014), and how displaced youth will negotiate social capital and its influence on their development of belonging. Despite uncertainties, many displaced people identify 'belonging' as the ultimate mark of living in an integrated community (Ager & Strang, 2008). The importance of certainty, especially when it comes to immigration status, will become apparent in the analysis of my own data later in this thesis. The challenge we discuss here, is how to foster integration and diversity for those who are still uncertain, without removing displaced youth from their supportive ethnic communities (O'Neill & Spybey, 2003).

What I take away from current literature on this debate is that displaced people should develop both types of social capital. This is more easily achieved if they first build bonding social capital, as a foundation of strong bonding will make it easier to build bridging social capital. Establishing and maintaining social connections with displaced peers will help build the confidence and provide the support network that displaced youth will need to branch out and establish strong relationships with locals. That being said, bridging social capital does not come as easily as bonding social capital. Displaced youth need to work for it. Integration success is, after all, a personal assessment (Korac, 2003).

This section on belonging has reviewed how Hopkins' (2013) five goals fit in to the Human Geography conceptual understanding of 'belonging.' Through these goals I have come to better understand the indicators that influence displaced youth's negotiations of belonging. Chapter 5 will review how NGOs perceive the negotiations that these indicators influence and reveal where my own research falls within the main debates that this section addresses on how displaced youth negotiate their belonging.

2.4 Agency for Displaced Youth

The various NGOs that work with displaced youth in the AZCs across the Netherlands have the common mission to help displaced youth cope with their challenges by providing various positive experiences through sport, art, etc. These groups understand that the process of displacement and migration is only one aspect of the lives of displaced youth. They are shaped by other identity conflicts, interests, opportunities and struggles that researchers and policy makers should be paying attention to in order to best support this demographic (Chase, et al, 2019). Young people want to tell stories that focus on topics other than migration and displacement. If we want to create spaces for young people to present more complex representations of themselves, we must take the time to develop trust and intimacy (ibid). This thesis seeks to understand how NGOs facilitating programming for displaced youth best support the interests and needs of youth. Through this understanding, this thesis will make recommendations for how the development of belonging should fit in to these support programs. In order to understand how we can best support displaced youth, we need to remember that displaced youth face the same challenges as any migrant – the difference is that society does not give them any power to make their own choices. Researchers in Child Geography see this as an issue (Matthews & Limb, 1999).

The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child presents an interesting paradox where it implies that children are rights holders but are not agents capable of determining their own rights (Lems, et al, 2019). Article 22 "clearly states that until the age of legal adulthood, host states are responsible for the protection of unaccompanied minors' best interests…" (ibid). Who gets to determine what are the best interests of the minor?

The negotiation of 'best interests' for displaced youth is often conducted between the state and social workers. Sometimes it will include parents, but it does not often enough include the youth themselves (Allsopp & Chase, 2019). I believe that at the very least, the youth themselves should be consulted. Youth have their own needs, aspirations, and behaviors. When they can feel like they are in charge, and can use their own skills and talents, they become guardians of their own success and well-being (Kohli, 2011). Social science researchers, including those that work in the Human Geography field, use the term 'agency' to describe the capacity an individual has to make their own choices. Chris Barker (2003) argues that agency is socially produced and culturally generated, "…enabled by differentially distributed resources. This gives rise to various degrees of the ability to act in specific spaces" (pg. 236). Since international policy removes the ability for displaced youth to make their own choices, it is up to the NGOs to provide the resources that encourage agency among displaced youth. In another study on the development of agency with refugee youth, agency is described as the sense of competence and ability that refugee youth must possess in order to achieve their own aspirations for the future (Chatty, 2009).

Lems, et al (2019) use the term 'Victimcy' to describe the self-representation by which agency may be effectively exercised alongside 'victimhood.' "For individuals marginalized by social, economic, and political structures, such as refugee youth, possessing agency and the ability to contribute to society is critical to their sense of belonging" (Carlton, 2015: pg. 342). Chase, et al (2019) add to this theory by writing that agency and vulnerability are not mutually exclusive. "Individuals can change their relationships to contexts and influence their life condition…Acknowledging that they can make choices does not make them less vulnerable, just more human" (Chase, et al, 2019: pg. 8).

Youth's participation and perspectives on their own situations are often missing from research being conducted to support them. Research on the Progressive Participation of Children suggests that children should be involved in child geography research, which will lead to outcomes which encourage empowerment, participation, and self-determination (Matthews & Limb, 1999). Matthews and Limb (ibid) believe that we need a social science where children learn to reflect upon their own conditions so that they can embrace their agency and take greater responsibility in shaping their own identities and

communities. To support the encouragement of agency, my research includes a study on how NGOs facilitate the leadership and empowerment aspects of agency for the displaced youth participating in their programming. If NGOs foster leadership and empowerment for displaced youth, the youth should be able to provide feedback that leads to program evaluations and implementing changes according to the interests and needs expressed by the displaced youth themselves.

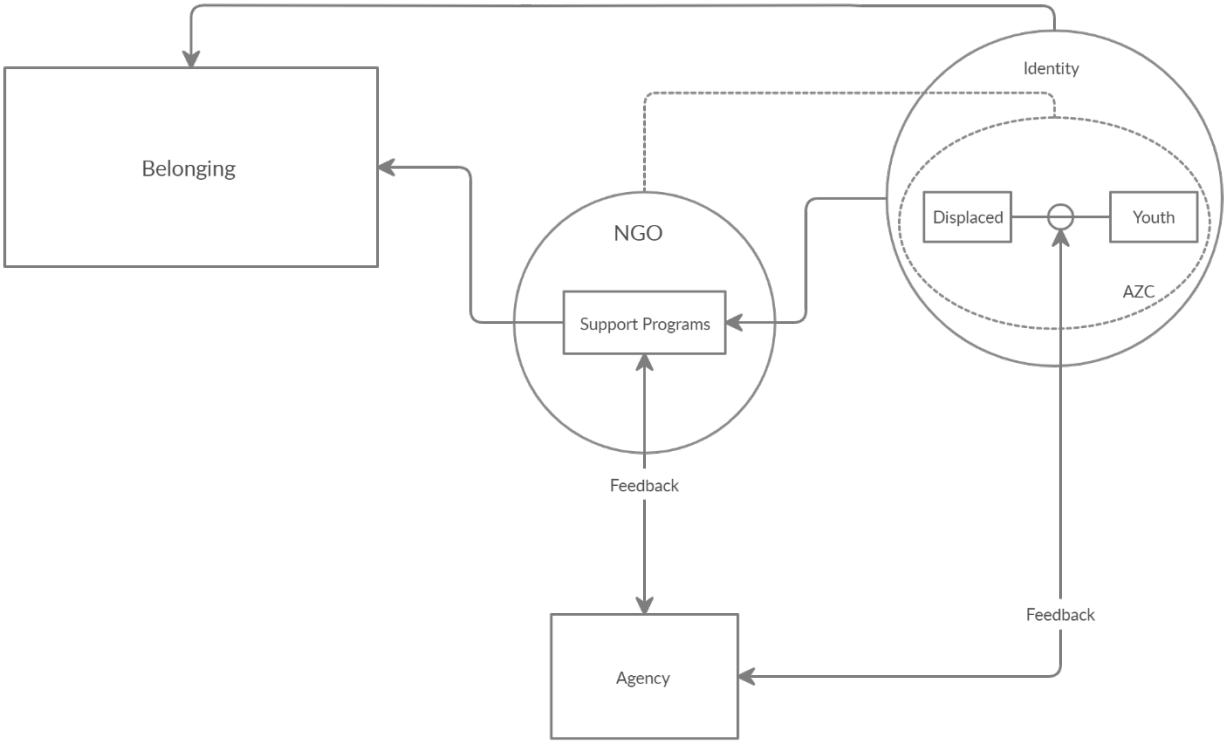
The interests and needs of displaced youth are often torn between the collective obligation to their family and individualistic opportunities being offered by their host country, such as university, new hobbies, and romantic relationships (Allsopp & Chase, 2019). Educational success is a prominent supporter of displaced youth harnessing their agency (Kohli, 2011). Personal agency in reconstructing their lives motivates them to connect with others, both displaced peers and locals (ibid). In other words, agency also allows them to be more successful at building social capital, which in turn helps them develop their sense of belonging (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014). Carlton (2015) believes that opportunities to volunteer provides displaced youth with a source of leadership, belonging, and well-being which can stimulate civic consciousness and lead to social integration and cohesion within the host community. That being said, "when refugee youth have to assimilate to the language, culture, values, and behaviors of the dominant group in order to 'fit in' and be accepted, this involves a profound misrecognition of their plural, hybrid social identities…" (Spaaij, 2015: pg. 316). Agency should allow displaced youth to determine for themselves how they can best belong, whether through strengthening bonds with displaced peers, peers in the local host community, or a combination of both. This theoretical research assumes that there should be a balance of both for displaced youth to successfully settle into their host community. Encouraging displaced youth to embrace their agency will allow them to determine how to best develop that balance.

I had planned to embrace and facilitate the use of agency and the Progressive Participation of Children in my fieldwork, to provide substance in answers to my research questions. While this became impossible due to reasons that will be discussed in Chapter 3, I stand by the belief that only by encouraging agency among displaced youth in the Netherlands, they will be able to express the challenges they have faced, as well as their own needs, so that together we can determine what strategies NGOs can use to most effectively help them develop belonging within the Netherlands.

2.5 Summary and Conceptual Framework

This thesis seeks to understand how NGO facilitated programs can best support refugee youth in developing a sense of belonging in the Netherlands. This chapter has been a review on theoretical concepts that are imperative to this understanding. Displacement is the concept that we must understand in order to recognize how and why displaced youth are a categorized group, based on certain identity labels. 'Displaced youth' is an identity categorization that we must understand the various components of in order to break the identity down and realize that 'refugee' and 'youth' are much more than just these labels. However, the circumstances of an individual's displacement influence the way one searches for home, and therefore has a great effect on how one develops belonging, the central concept that my research question considers. When displaced youth work to develop belonging in the Netherlands, there is a lot to negotiate. The support programs facilitated by NGOs are meant to help displaced youth with these negotiations. Through programming, NGOs encourage agency amongst displaced youth. They encourage agency by providing opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills and feel empowered to use their voices to indicate what their own needs and desires are. With agency, youth can provide feedback to the NGOs that helps improve programming to better support the needs of displaced youth as they develop belonging.

To recap, displacement is the common denominator for displaced youth. Displaced youth seek belonging. NGO programs help to facilitate belonging, and the agency for displaced youth encouraged by NGOs ensures that belonging is developed in the appropriate and necessary ways, according to the needs of the displaced youth themselves. This overview results in the following conceptual model:


Belonging
Identity
Displaced
Youth
AZC
NGO
Support Programs
Feedback
Feedback
Agency

Chapter 3. Methodological Framework

This research seeks to discover how NGOs influence displaced youth's understandings and interpretations of belonging, and how the NGOs facilitate and support the negotiations that youth face with the concept. Qualitative methods of fieldwork and data collection allow me, as a researcher, to identify issues by giving a voice to others who experience the concepts that this study explores, as well as the interpretations that others give to behavior and events (Hennink, et al, 2020).

While the original goal of this thesis was to use qualitative methods that would give voice to displaced youth themselves, the COVID-19 pandemic that arrived in the Netherlands in March 2020 made this nearly impossible. Therefore, this chapter will dedicate the first two sections to a review of my original intended strategies for data collection and fieldwork. In the following two sections, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on these plans, and how the research methods shifted, will be discussed.

3.1 Research Methods: Qualitative Ethnography

When designing how I was going to collect my data, I turned once more to Hopkins' (2013) five points on understanding identity and belonging. If I was going to understand the ways in which displaced youth in the Netherlands interacted with the concept of belonging through these five points of understanding identity, I was going to need to interact with the displaced youth living at the AZCs and see for myself how they communicated and negotiated belonging, how others around them interpreted their belonging, and how geographical context shaped their belonging.

Korac (2003), a researcher referenced often in Chapter 2, writes that more research from the refugee perspective is required, as they should contribute to defining, facilitating, and assessing the process of settlement and integration for themselves. Chase, et al (2019) suggest that ethnographic research allows for a more rounded narrative that sees young people as important social actors. Since encouraging agency for displaced youth is one of the central themes of my research, it seemed appropriate that I would use ethnographic research in order for displaced youth to have an opportunity to use their voices and share their own perspectives. Additionally, the concepts that this thesis explores are deeply personal for an individual, and the context in which one interacts with these concepts affects how one might interpret their identity and belonging. Ethnographic research allows context specificity. It also articulates Kohli's (2011) argument that we need to look at the social space within which

belonging is woven, rather than at the individual displaying belonging. Similar to this thesis, his study was not about the individual characteristics of belonging, but about how belonging is developed by youth engaging with their environment. Therefore, it was important that in my data collection I would interact with my subjects within one of the environments in which they were negotiating their belonging: at the AZC. The ethnographic approach would allow me to get close enough to my subjects to observe the contexts in which they negotiate their identity and belonging, while also remaining an objective reporter.

I planned to conduct interviews with professionals as a supplement, so that I could understand the precise ways that NGOs facilitate the negotiation of belonging for displaced youth, which would lead to my ability to make recommendations for how they might improve their goals. Ritchie, et al (2013), would label this an evaluative and investigative study.

In a later section I will discuss how COVID-19 caused the ethnographic element of my research to become remote, leading in-depth and semi-structured interviews to become my main research method. The ethnographic focus thus shifted from being about displaced youth experiences to being about NGOs' perceptions of displaced youth experiences in support program spaces.

3.2 Fieldwork: Location and Practice

The initial plan was to be a TeamUp facilitator in the coalition between War Child, Save the Children, and UNICEF Netherlands. TeamUp runs programs one day a week for youth who are living in AZCs all over the Netherlands. Their mission is to support the psychosocial development of displaced youth, primarily through non-verbal sports and movement-based activities designed to address themes such as building positive friendships, respect for others, self-assertiveness, conflict resolution, overcoming stress, anger, fear, and bullying (War Child, 2018). It was the perfect setting to get to know the ins and outs of an NGO support program, as well as interact directly with and observe my subjects while providing them needed support.

I volunteered at the AZC in Nijmegen, home to about three hundred asylum seekers and refugees from Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Eritrea, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Palestine, Russia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Venezuela, and Yemen. The time during which an individual lives at the AZC can vary from just a few weeks, to multiple years. While the people I interacted with were mostly consistent, the group shifted a bit as new people arrived, and others departed. For those who departed, sometimes it was because they were granted refugee status, received residency permits, and they could move to

alternative housing. Other times they were being sent back to a previous host country, or to their home country.

I worked with two groups of AZC youth. One group consisted of youth between the ages of 6 and 11 (children), and the other group was for youth between the ages of 12 and 17 (teenagers). I spent one hour a week with each group. Throughout the weeks that I worked there, it was reported that there were between thirty and thirty-five children, and between fourteen and thirty-five teenagers living in the AZC. However, we usually only had twelve to twenty participants at the children session, and four to ten participants at the teenager session.

During sessions I worked with other volunteers to facilitate activities within the TeamUp model, addressing the TeamUp themes and goals. Below is an example of a TeamUp evaluation form explaining the themes and goals of a session, and how well we were able to achieve our goals within the session. The form is a standard TeamUp form, available only to facilitators in a private DropBox folder, and was completed by me on March 9, 2020:

EVALUATION FORM

Date	09-03-2020

Facilitators

Joep
Hillary
Kris
Rogelio

Theme(s)

☐ Fear	☆ Assertiveness
☐ Anger	☐ Conflict
☐ Bullying	☆ Respect
☐ Stress and tension	☆ Friendship and friends

Number of Youth at the location

Boys	Girls	Total	Age group
8	6	14	11-17

Number of Youth:	Present	First Time
Boys	3	3
Girls	4	
Total	7	3

What do we want to achieve in this session?

We want to address setting boundaries, dealing with fear, and standing up for yourself.

Playing Around (Cock fight, Knee-tag, Back to Back): These are all games where the participants set and expand their boundaries, negotiating personal space, but also working together to achieve a goal.

Human pyramid: this activity also deals with setting boundaries and working together to achieve a goal.

Cross the line: This activity places an emphasize on peace through getting to know and learning to understand each other, as well as develop self-confidence.

Who is the Leader: This is a dance game that encourages leadership and assertiveness, as well as paying attention to your peers and working together.

Farm animals: This game requires participants to listen to each other, pay attention to each other, and work together.

Planned activities

Check-in:
OK, music pre-dancing
Warming-up:
Playing around (Cockfight, Knee-tag, Back to Back)
Main:
Human pyramid, Cross the Line, Who is the Leader
Cooling-down:
Farm animals
Check-out:
High - five corona style

Particular issues in the group we want to pay attention to

We are aiming to discover how children react to programs that deal with more personal and serious topics, rather than just having fun.

Other comments

We had three new boys from Eritrea who did not speak any English or Dutch, and we had no other participants who could translate for them. At first the language barrier was challenging, but we figured out how to communicate the activities to them sufficiently, and we were both surprised and happy that they stayed and participated.

As you can see in the evaluation, this program was designed to address specific themes that TeamUp focuses on, as well as be a fun way for the youth living at the AZC to spend an evening together. For me as a researcher, by observing how participants interacted with peers during sessions, as well as volunteers and staff with multiple backgrounds, I was able to observe some of the challenges that displaced youth face, and consider the ways these challenges affect their negotiations of belonging in the Netherlands. During this program and programs facilitated in subsequent weeks, I sought to understand what participants see as requirements in order to develop belonging within the Netherlands, paying close attention to the use of language, expression of culture, preferences in music, sports, and the friends they talk about. I took detailed field notes throughout sessions, as field notes provide an opportunity for researchers to record what they see and hear, think about the dynamics of encounters, and revisit issues that become relevant to the data during the analytical stage of research (Ritchie, et al, 2013).

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, after our March 9th program, the AZC shut down all their non-essential programming and refused the entry of visitors indefinitely. Though the time I spent there was short and fragmented, I was able to make substantial observations. These will be reviewed and considered in the following analytical chapters.

3.3 The Effects of COVID-19 on Fieldwork

Throughout the AZC lockdown, my TeamUp volunteer team continued to meet weekly on Zoom so we could receive updates on the situation within the AZC and brainstorm about ways we could continue to support the youth in a safe and controlled environment. We sent physical and electronic materials that young residents of the AZC could use during their period of quarantine and social distancing. We created several short videos with program activities that participants could follow with their families. We created short videos of ourselves sending messages to the youth about how we hoped they were staying safe, and that we could not wait to come and resume activities with them. The intention here was to make sure the youth knew that we still cared about their well-being and would continue to support them in the ways that we could. Videos were uploaded to YouTube and the MyCOA application. It was difficult to determine whether participants were actually seeing or using the videos.

In early May the Municipality of Nijmegen reached out to TeamUp to discuss whether facilitators could resume regular activities at the AZC with new rules to ensure appropriate social distancing according to COVID-19 recommended protocol. The idea of facilitating programs through the

property wall of the AZC was discussed, which would require facilitators to stay on one side of the wall, and participants on the other. To myself and my team, this seemed like an incredibly awkward scenario which would not only present several challenges, but potentially also be detrimental to the supportive relationships we were trying to build with the youth. TeamUp programs are about facilitating friendship and togetherness and fostering community and inclusion. It is hard to foster inclusion through a wall.

For several weeks we discussed the other challenges we would face in this scenario. For example, we would not be able to motivate participants to join in on our activities; even if they did come join, we would not be able to encourage participants to actively participate; we could not break up fights should they occur; we could not care for a participant if they got hurt. Ultimately, my team agreed that we should resume facilitation, because programming under strange circumstances was better than no programming at all. However, it still took several weeks for the municipality, TeamUp, and COA to come to an agreement on what all the new rules would be.

On June 8th, 2020 we were finally allowed to resume the facilitation of TeamUp programming at the AZC in Nijmegen. While I did continue to attend and act as facilitator, it was too late for further observations to be considered in my research.

3.4 The Effects of COVID-19 on Research Methods: Interviews

Since COVID-19 kept me out of the AZC for the majority of my data collection period, I had to give up on my goal of collecting data from the displaced youth perspective, and my intention to facilitate agency for displaced youth. However, I still wanted to make sure I was meeting my goal of looking into the Hopkins (2013) five points of understanding identity and belonging, while facilitating ethnographic research that would highlight the importance of NGOs encouraging agency among displaced youth as a means for supporting their development of belonging.

By April 2020 my methodological focus was on in-depth and semi-structured interviews. “Interviews can provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds. While the interview is itself a symbolic interaction, this does not discount the possibility that knowledge of the social world beyond the interaction can be obtained” (Miller & Glassner, 1997; pg: 100). While my interviewees would also be observers of my primary research subjects, rather than the subjects themselves, accessing meaning attributed by these research participants was still highly valuable, and the notion of obtaining knowledge on a social world beyond the specific interaction of my interviews was profoundly relevant to the situation in which I found myself.

I wanted to make sure I was getting as clear and rounded a picture as possible, so I knew I was going to have to branch out from TeamUp, and speak with facilitators from many of the different NGOs that worked with youth at the AZC in Nijmegen. I also planned to interview COA staff from the AZC to get some insight on their views of how the displaced youth interacted with and were influenced by the various NGO programming that was regularly facilitated for them. I developed an operationalization chart (Appendix 1) and interview guide (Appendix 2). Both were structured using the concepts, or dimensions, discussed in Chapter 2, with a great focus on the five points for understanding identity and belonging. Ultimately the interview guide had three main portions, and each portion sought to collect data in reference to each of the three sub-questions that this thesis seeks to answer. The first asked questions that focused on the general background of interviewees and organizations. The second asked questions that focused on the observations that professionals have made of how the program participants negotiate identity and belonging. The third section asked questions that focused on how the NGOs encourage agency amongst their participants. The dimension of agency was the toughest one to reincorporate into my data collection, considering I was not going to be able to speak directly with the displaced youth. However, by addressing the topic with NGOs to understand how they encourage agency among youth, I do believe that I designed interview questions that allowed me to add to research around the importance of encouraging agency among displaced youth.

At first, I intended to focus on facilitating semi-structured interviews, where the interviewer asks key questions in the same way each time, and probes for further information based on the responses of the interviewee (Ritchie, et al, 2013). However, once I read Ritchie, et al's (ibid) key features of in-depth interviews, I realized that the combination of structure and flexibility was more what I was looking for. In-depth interviews invite interviewees to put forward ideas and suggestions on a topic and propose solutions to the problems being raised. While this is the agency I would have loved to encourage with displaced youth under different circumstances, it still seemed relevant for conducting interviews with program facilitators and COA staff. I wanted to give them the opportunity to bring up dimensions and indicators that I was not considering. After all, with my limited time interacting with the youth, my interviewees were much more familiar with the various dimensions and indicators that displaced youth are faced with in their daily lives. If there was something I was missing, short of being able to ask the youth themselves, my interviewees would know what additionally needed to be addressed in my research.

I designed my interview questions with a combination of content mapping questions (designed to identify the dimensions or issues relevant to the interviewee) and content mining questions (designed

to explore each dimension in detail and access the points of view of the interviewee) (Ritchie, et al, 2013). The combination of in-depth and semi-structured interviews, infused with these two types of questions, would make my interviews both cultural, and topical (ibid). The topical side would focus on the events and processes of NGO programming, asking questions that were concerned with what was happening during sessions, and why specific themes and methods were being addressed during programming. The cultural aspect would be more exploratory, leading to the understanding of the underlying values, concepts, and norms being observed amongst the participants of programing.

While I wanted to keep a controlled group and focus only on NGOs working within the AZC in Nijmegen, COVID-19 made this difficult as well. With COA working with a skeleton staff of only emergency security personnel, it was very difficult to get in touch with COA. In the end, I was not able to conduct any interviews with COA staff. Ultimately, I had to branch out to interviewing individuals all over the Netherlands who work with displaced youth in any capacity.

While a physical encounter is generally seen as an essential aspect of an interview in order for it to be interactive, generative, and in depth (Ritchie, et al, 2013), this was not possible due to the COVID-19 crisis. Most interviews were conducted over Zoom or Skype so that I could video call with my interviewees, easily record the interviews, and ensure appropriate social distancing according to suggested COVID-19 protocols. One interview was conducted in person. All interviews were conducted in English, with one exception. In the exception, the interview was conducted with a translator who could translate between English and Dutch. This was also the interview that was done in person.

In the end, I spent 8 hours interacting with an observing youth at the AZC in Nijmegen. Further, I conducted 9 interviews with 2 contacts from TeamUp, 2 contacts from TeamUp at School, 1 contact from Stichting de Vrolijkheid, 1 contact from Stichting ElanArt, 1 contact from Stichting Mexaena, 1 contact from Pharos, and 1 contact from Nidos. A full list of interviewees can be found in Appendix 3. A short review of each NGO, their mission, goals, themes, and methods will be addressed in Chapter 4. Since Nidos is not an NGO that provides support programs to displaced youth, it will not specifically be addressed in Chapter 4. However, my interviewee from Nidos is an expert on displaced unaccompanied minors, and his knowledge and expertise will be reviewed in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.5 Methods for Analysis

After my interviews were conducted, recorded, and manually transcribed using the oTranscribe web application, I created an indexing system using a thematic chart built from my operationalization

chart (Appendix 1). Each variable from the operationalization chart went into the thematic chart with a code. This would allow me to sort my data, both from field notes and interviews, into the conceptual indicators and summarize key points from the data while retaining the context and language in which it had been expressed (Ritchie, et al, 2013). I organized my code for analysis using the cross-sectional 'code and retrieve method' for data organization (Mason, 2002). By using labels and categories in my thematic chart, I was able to retrieve data that corresponded with each indicator, placing quotes under the relevant labels. This method provided a systematic overview of the scope of my research, clearly identifying the common indicators from my operationalization chart and allowing me to draw comparisons and connections between what each interviewee had to say about each indicator. When reviewing portions of interviews with NGO staff that reviewed the mission, goals, themes and methods of the different programs, the data would be placed in the same thematic chart, but I maintained distinctiveness within each NGO, understanding how their unique narratives and processes interacted with indicators from my operationalization chart.

The next step was to interpret and analyze the data. There are three contexts of interpretation in qualitative analysis, identified by Steinar Kvale (1996):

1. Self-understanding, where the researchers attempt to formulate condensed interpretations of what interviewees mean and understand.
2. Critical common-sense understanding, where researchers interpret using general knowledge about the context of statements.
3. Theoretical understanding, where interpretation is placed on theoretical perspective.

My interpretations for qualitative analysis were largely based in the latter two contexts. I used a combination of Ethnographic Accounts Analyses (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Lofland & Lofland, 1995) and Policy and Evaluation Analysis (Ritchie, et al, 1994) to prepare the data for discussion. Ethnographic Accounts Analyses is an approach to qualitative analysis which uses descriptive detail to relay the ways of life of individuals, groups, or organizations. Using this approach, my analysis was able to display patterns of regular interaction between the NGOs I was interviewing and the displaced youth that they worked with. I was able to build a discussion of how my interviewees observe displaced youth negotiating belonging, as well as the rest of the concepts discussed in Chapter 2. Policy and Evaluation Analysis is an approach to analysis that seeks to provide answers about the context of social policies and programs and measure the effectiveness and impact of their delivery (ibid). Using this approach, my analysis was able to provide a picture for understanding the context within which these NGOs provide

support, and evaluate their delivery, effectiveness, and impact as it relates to supporting displaced youth as they develop belonging. This approach led to my ability to make recommendations for how NGOs can better support displaced youth in developing their belonging in the Netherlands.

3.6 Integrity and Ethics

It is always important to consider your ethical responsibility, especially when conducting research that involves minors. During fieldwork, I consciously avoided addressing traumatic topics directly with youth, as I am not qualified or equipped with the tools to support them through trauma. An observational approach allowed me to learn about how youth negotiated and interacted with concepts related to displacement, home, identity, and belonging, without them needing to talk about these topics, or their experiences related to these topics. This did bring up some concerns with my role as a 'sneaky researcher,' where the participants I was working with at TeamUp did not know that I was conducting research on them. Under different circumstances where COVID-19 would not have disrupted my original plan for fieldwork, I would have had more time to gain trust with program participants, and I would have had the opportunity to be more open and clear about my role and research intentions.

I also have a responsibility to protect the identities of my subjects, particularly those of vulnerable minors. In conducting interviews with professionals, I maintained my ethics by providing interviewees the opportunity to request that their personal identities and associations with the organizations they work for be protected within my research. Therefore, in some cases, pseudonyms have been used to refer to interviewees. This thesis does not identify any minors.

3.7 Shortcomings

This research does include a few shortcomings. Certainly, the COVID-19 situation disrupted my ability to collect a more complete set of data. I was unable to dive deeper into the practice of agency, which would have otherwise added an important layer to my discussion on empowering displaced youth to voice what their needs are when it comes to developing belonging within the Netherlands. I collected sufficient data from NGOs around the importance that they give to encouraging agency for participants. However, this angle did lack the youth perspective that I would have liked to achieve.

Additionally, I would have liked to have been able to conduct interviews with young adults who had grown up as youth in the AZCs, in order to ethically address their experiences with NGO

programming while growing up in the Netherlands. This additional demographic would have added a data set that further developed the Personal Development and Future Prospect indicators within my operationalization chart (Appendix 1). If I had had more time to facilitate the post COVID-19 research plan once it became necessary to do so, this may have been achieved.

While my plan B was a sufficient way to collect relevant data, it is important to note that in many cases I had professionals from NGOs providing paraphrased quotes from youth and parents of the youth that they had worked with. They did try to provide these quotes in sufficient context. However, I was only able to interpret this data within the first context referenced by Kvale (1996), where I am interpreting someone else's interpretation. While this context was not found to be insufficient, I do believe that it is important that further research conducted on displaced youth would benefit from providing opportunities for displaced youth to speak for themselves.

I would have liked to have kept a focus on the AZC in Nijmegen and worked exclusively with NGOs that operate there. This would have allowed me to get a full picture of the support being offered to youth living in an AZC. While I recognize that not all AZCs receive the same levels of support, my research could have been a clear and complete case study.

Lastly, my research analysis is an interpretation of complex worlds that are influenced by so many different variables, such that I did not have the capacity to include them all in one study. My research covers a relatively small set of indicators that displaced youth must negotiate. However, these complexities should always be considered to fully understand the depth and breadth of experiences, needs, and greater lifeworlds of displaced youth.

Chapter 4. Missions and Goals of NGO Support Programs

The first sub-question of this thesis concerns understanding what NGOs in the Netherlands are already doing to support the development of belonging among displaced youth. This chapter will focus on reviewing a number of different NGO support programs in order to understand the different approaches to supporting displaced youth, and particularly whether or not NGOs find it important to address their development of belonging. This chapter provides an overview of each of the NGOs that participated in this research, identifying the similarities and differences between them, and determining what gaps may need to be filled so that displaced youth are receiving the best support for their development and well-being. As mentioned in Chapter 3, it will not provide an overview for Nidos, as Nidos does not offer a specific support program.

4.1 TeamUp

TeamUp is the NGO that I spent the most time getting to know, as I was a program facilitator for the organization during my data collection period. TeamUp is a program that was developed by the UNICEF Netherlands, Save the Children, and War Child coalition in 2015 during what is known as the 'European Refugee Crisis.' With a great influx of displaced people arriving to the Netherlands, many NGOs realized the need for psychosocial interventions that would strengthen the well-being of youth affected by war, conflict, and overall, by displacement.

Katia, a project content developer at TeamUp and one of my interviewees, spoke about how TeamUp was developed with the five essential elements of immediate trauma intervention in mind. These five elements, researched by Stevan Hobfoll et al., (2007), are 1) a sense of safety; 2) calming; 3) a sense of self and community efficiency; 4) connectedness; and 5) hope. In order to address these elements, TeamUp developers chose their own eight themes to address while providing relevant interventional resources to displaced youth. These themes are: 1) Fear; 2) Assertiveness; 3) Anger; 4) Stress and Tension; 5) Conflict; 6) Bullying; 7) Respect; and 8) Friendship and Friends. As Katia said,

> "*These 8 themes were chosen in a response to what we saw in the children. So, there was a lot of bullying, cultures were not mixing, so even though you're in an emergency shelter in a refugee center…there's a lot of bullying, a lot of conflict, a lot of anger, fear, stress and tension, difficulty in making friends."*

In Chapter 2, it is written that Allsopp and Chase (2019) recognize that displaced youth are not often included in discussions about how to negotiate their best interests. It is uplifting to see here that this NGO designed its programs as a response to what they saw in displaced youth, exemplifying that TeamUp recognizes the agency that displaced youth have, and have developed a mission that reflects the needs of the youth themselves, rather than the needs that policy makers or governments set for the youth. This is also seen in how program sessions are facilitated.

TeamUp recruits volunteers who facilitate programs once a week for youth living in AZCs all over the Netherlands. Facilitator teams create a session plan for each week, determining which themes to address with participants. Since most of the displaced people arriving to the Netherlands speak a variety of languages, TeamUp developers saw a specific need for a non-verbal intervention program that would bring youth together without the need for a common language, reducing the social isolation that they could otherwise face with language difficulties (Wernesjö, 2012). Therefore, TeamUp was designed to address the above-mentioned themes through movement, play, and active games, where youth could socially engage without the need for language. TeamUp developed a game book which assigns each game or intervention to address one or more of the eight themes. When describing how the games address themes, Katia said,

> "*You can release stress and tension in your body by just playing. And at the same time, because you're laughing, you can make friends because you're playing a game together. And you learn, without each other's background, without talking, you are engaged in a common activity, therefore you are making friends. You get angry in a game, so that's about self-regulating. How do you bring your level of arousal down so you don't start beating or hitting someone? So, the themes are very interrelated, and they also can be worked out again without talking about it, but by doing…By the simple act of engaging in movement through the body with others…attuning to one another, being seen by others…it taps into a socialization aspect as well, because you're with others through play and movement."*

This quote exemplifies how TeamUp uses non-verbal play to stimulate social capital development. Participants learn to play together regardless of their backgrounds, regulate their behaviors within their community, and strengthen their social networks in an easily grasped, youth friendly environment. In consideration of how TeamUp supports negotiations of belonging, it does so by supporting this social

capital development. The two trauma intervention elements of sense of self and community efficiency, as well as connectedness, lead to how the eight TeamUp themes are used to develop belonging among participants of TeamUp programs. This can be seen in how participants respond to each other, how they socialize, and how they develop belonging with other displaced youth within the AZC.

Additionally, TeamUp facilitators support the development of belonging by designing each week's session based on current issues and needs observed over previous sessions, and by asking the participants what they would like to do and what games they would like to play. This, once again, highlights their agency, which, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, has a direct effect on their development of belonging. More examples of how TeamUp helps to facilitate the development of belonging will be addressed in the following chapters.

4.2 TeamUp at School

TeamUp at School is a sub program that was built out of TeamUp in 2017. Displaced youth are required to attend language classes when they arrive in the Netherlands, whether they are still amidst their asylum-seeking procedures or have already received their official refugee status. Cato, a Project leader at TeamUp at School, explained to me that after the refugee crisis and the influx of migrants arriving to the Netherlands, it became apparent that many Dutch language teachers were not trained to work with diverse backgrounds, and many expressed the need for support in that development. The first schools that reached out to TeamUp to train their teachers to facilitate programs asked questions about how to help their students on a socio-emotional level. As Anoek, a TeamUp at School trainer told me, schools in the Netherlands are required to have some type of program that addresses socio-emotional learning. Most of the programs that existed before 2017 required a lot of verbal communication. Teachers found the non-verbal style of TeamUp programs very appealing. TeamUp at School was thus created to address these needs.

While TeamUp at School uses the same themes and the same game book as TeamUp in the AZC, there are a few major differences. First, in the AZC, TeamUp is facilitated by volunteers who only see the youth one day a week. In the schools, TeamUp is facilitated by the teachers who see their students every day. This means that teachers have more insight into the ways the students interact with each other, the challenges they face, and can better determine which themes and which interventions will best suit the students in regard to their socio-emotional learning and well-being.

Not unlike TeamUp, TeamUp at School helps youth develop soft skills that stimulate the development of social capital and thus belonging. As Anoek said in her interview,

> *"Most of the time, the teachers tell me about the children who came in very shy, and then sometimes they are still shy in class, but when TeamUp starts they open up and they want to be the tagger or they want to join…So they forget that they are shy, or that other children might be looking at them. And they just go. And then they experience that the other children aren't looking at them, indeed. And then they bring it back to class, that's what the teachers tell us. Once they open up in TeamUp, they also open up during the week."*

As described in Chapter 2, Lems (2016) believes that when displaced youth can actively carve themselves a place in their new community, they develop belonging. As suggested in this quote, TeamUp at School helps youth carve their place within the TeamUp community by developing confidence and social skills. These skills can then lead to success in the classroom.

When TeamUp helps a student open up in ways that will support their success in the classroom, TeamUp is indirectly providing the student with the tools that they will need to develop belonging within communities outside of the classroom. For example, they excel at learning the Dutch language, or they excel in other subjects that will improve their prospects later in life. When discussing whether one of TeamUp at School's main goals was to help children open up so that they could specifically do better in school, Anoek responded by saying,

> *"It's one of the goals, yeah. But the main goal I think, is forgetting the sorrows for a while, and not having to prove yourself to others. That's the main, main goal. But also mingling with other cultures, other children, and boys and girls."*

This quote describes how TeamUp at School becomes a safe space for youth where they can be themselves without consequence, and only focus on having fun. Providing displaced youth with a safe space to be themselves is also part of supporting their development of belonging. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

4.3 Stichting de Vrolijkheid

In addition to being a trained TeamUp program facilitator, I also had the opportunity to observe some of the programs that Stichting de Vrolijkheid (Vrolijkheid) offers twice a week at the AZC in Arnhem. Vrolijkheid is an NGO that was developed by an artist who spent time volunteering in Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East in the 1990s. While she was there, she witnessed the power that music had to bring cheer and happiness to the refugees. She made it her mission to bring that sentiment back to the refugees living in the Netherlands. Vrolijkheid thus uses art, music, theater, and other creative forms to create cheerful spaces in which youth living in AZCs can find the inspiration to discover and develop their own talents. The organization stands under the belief that every child has a right to play, and a right to a safe environment where they can develop themselves in a healthy way.

When I asked Linda, a program coordinator for the NGO, why she thought art was the chosen method for Vrolijkheid, she said:

> "*There are other organizations that work with sports, which is good. Some kids like painting and some kids like running, so it's very good to have different things…Kids don't have a voice, and they don't have the words yet to express trauma…They use art. Kids like to use art. And even kids that like to play soccer, they draw what they feel, or they express it in their music. It's a good way for kids to express themselves."*

Chapter 2 addressed how Sampson and Gifford (2010) believe that youth find comfort in spaces where they can participate in familiar activities. Linda's quote suggests that Vrolijkheid considers the multiple interests that displaced youth can have and the founder wanted to provide the space where they can participate in familiar activities, other than sports, which make youth feel like kids again. She also speaks of the value of storytelling through self-expression, which matches what Chase, et al, (2019) said about how displaced youth strive to tell stories about things other than their displacement. Vrolijkheid gives them the space to do that, in over twenty AZCs around the Netherlands.

Every AZC working with Vrolijkheid has a project coordinator who invites artists to facilitate projects based on the needs of each AZC, especially considering if the majority of residents are newcomers, if they have been in the Netherlands for a while, or if they are waiting to be transitioned out of the Netherlands. Linda shared examples of projects they have facilitated in the past. These included "*a project where we make a large art piece in the garden, or a project where we make a video with all of the teenagers, a one minute video, or a project where we make paintings and we collect the paintings and hang them in all of the rooms."*

Vrolijkheid has five main principles that programs and activities are designed with: 1) Cheerfulness and carefree moments; 2) Safety and creating safe space; 3) Trust building; 4) Story telling; and 5) Resilience. These five principles meet the UNHCR (1989) key recovery goals for displaced youth which were mentioned in Chapter 2. Connections are made between safety and safe space, social connections and trust building, resilience, dignity, and meaning in life. With these five principles, Vrolijkheid achieves what Linda describes as the main goal of the organization, *"…to try to create a positive memory living under these circumstances."* The promotion of creating positive memories is how Vrolijkheid influences the development of belonging within the Netherlands, as positive memories play a role in the reterritorialization of displaced youth's identities, and creating positive memories in the Netherlands can lead to feelings of belonging within the Netherlands.

That being said, Linda told me that Vrolijkheid does not focus on the topic of belonging. She assumes displacement, the asylum seeking process, and waiting for residence permits are topics that are on the minds of the participants and their parents 24/7. Vrolijkheid strives to provide a space where youth do not have to think about those topics for a little while.

4.4 Stichting ElanArt

Stichting ElanArt (ElanArt) is an NGO founded by a former asylum seeker and refugee who looked at his own experiences and understanding of what it takes to build a new life in a foreign country as a displaced person and decided to help others like him. ElanArt seeks to improve the self-image, well-being, and futures of young displaced people by inspiring and motivating them to learn about and interact with the cultures in their society. ElanArt believes that the exploration of art and culture can narrow the gap between newcomers and the host society and build support and mutual understanding among diverse communities. This is in line with Ager and Strang's (2008) belief that having knowledge of your host culture and community makes it easier to establish a new home in that host community, as discussed in Chapter 2.

ElanArt targets young residents of AZCs, but not exclusively minors. They work with residents between the ages of 15 and 30, a decision made because the founder of ElanArt felt that there were a lot of programs for young children, and for adults, but not enough for teenagers and young adults. When I reached out to the founder of the organization and his associates, they were busy navigating the COVID-19 crisis and were unable to speak with me. However, I interviewed an ElanArt intern, Marie.

When I asked her about the main goals of ElanArt, she emphasized how they help participants find their talents, and then connect them with other groups or individuals who can help those talents grow even further. ElanArt organizes a wide range of activities for participants to explore, including art, dance, theater, cooking, and sports. Participants can choose their interests and attend relevant workshops that help them improve skills. This method supports Kohli's (2011) belief that when youth can use their own skills and talents, they are more likely to find success and well-being in their new space. ElanArt gives youth the tools that they need to find this success. They also provide youth the opportunity to meet and build community with people from different cultural backgrounds, further stimulating the development of social capital.

When it comes to belonging, Marie explained that ElanArt tries to help its participants build a sense of belonging by "*help[ing] the youth make contact with Dutch society so that they learn how it works here and…help[ing] them make contact with all different kinds of people through, like, soccer clubs, or with school."* This quote suggests that ElanArt believes in the importance of bridging social capital, and they strive to help participants achieve goals that will support long term stay in the Netherlands. Marie also shared that *"we try to teach them as much as possible about the Dutch culture, but we also turn it around sometimes, then they teach us about their culture, for example, through dance or through food."* This aspect of programming supports Kohli (2011) once more, as it is in line with the idea that by participating in activities from the home country that bring comfort, such as eating traditional foods and listening to traditional music, one can transfer feelings of home to the host country, which can subsequently aid in the development of belonging within a host country.

4.5 Stichting Mexaena

Stichting Mexaena (Mexaena), translating to 'Our Future' in Tigrinya, is an NGO that was founded in early 2016 by Eritreans with intention to operate exclusively for Eritrean asylum seekers and refugees who live in Utrecht. The organization was designed for Eritreans because the municipality and other organizations working with asylum seekers and refugees were seeing that compared to other groups, Eritrean migrants were having an especially hard time integrating into the Netherlands. The municipality and other NGOs had little experience with the Eritrean culture, values, and norms, and found it difficult to provide support to that group. Therefore, they called on the existing Eritrean community to act as a pivot between Eritrean newcomers and various other organizations and institutions in the city of Utrecht. As Chapter 2 discussed, Lems (2016) believes that finding a community

of your own people in a new place can support your sense of belonging to that place. The founders of Mexaena, as Eritreans, were able to build a foundation of trust and understanding with their fellow newcomers and use this trust to encourage their participation in activities around the city. Like ElanArt, programming is not offered for minors, but for older teenagers and young adults.

I interviewed Ruth, a current board member and active volunteer for the organization. Ruth described the current goal of the organization as connecting Eritrean asylum seekers and refugees with Dutch locals. The intention is to bridge the gap and provide an opportunity for both groups to learn about each other's cultural norms and values. The organization also provides a platform for young Eritreans to build their social and professional networks. They facilitate this by offering various skills and informational workshops about the job market, finances, education opportunities, etc. This is in direct support of helping participants build the bridging social capital that Mexaena believes they need to integrate into Dutch society. In fact, when I asked Ruth what she thought belonging in the Netherlands meant, she described this aspect of social capital. She said:

> *"I would say [belonging is] maintaining your own cultural identity while connecting with locals, and exchanging cultural norms and values…make them also aware that it's fine for them to maintain their own cultural identity, but it's also good to get in touch with people from other cultural backgrounds so that they can really grow and learn. Because you see a lot of people who just only maintain a network that basically only consists of people from their own cultural background, and that also limits them to really integrate here."*

Another way that Mexaena stimulates the social capital that this quote describes is by offering social and cultural events where people can come to have coffee, mingle, and network with each other in more casual environments. Teenage participants spend more time at social events. They also come to workshops that they find relevant to their situations.

Another one of Mexaena's main goals is to stimulate Dutch language acquisition. They encourage participants to practice their Dutch as much as possible during programs, as they align with Ager and Strang (2008) who wrote that integration works best when you know the local language. Mexaena believes that knowing the local language will help participants feel more at home, and aid in their building of bridging social capital. These aspects will be discussed further in the following chapter.

4.6 Pharos

Pharos is a Dutch national center of expertise on health disparities across the Netherlands, with a mission to reduce major health inequalities among the diverse populations living in the country. I had the pleasure of interviewing a staff person, Anna, who works in the Gezond Opgroeien department, which supports a healthy future for children. Anna focuses on many projects geared toward primary and secondary school aged refugees, asylum seekers, and status holders. Within her team, she works to develop a 'whole school approach' on well-being through Pharos' Well-being at School for refugees and newcomers project, which focuses on the school setting as the appropriate place to address the well-being and resilience of 'newcomer' students who have been displaced, rather than only on the development of their Dutch language skills. Choosing schools as the location in which to focus is well aligned with Sirriyeh's (2010) belief discussed in Chapter 2, that education is one of the most important institutions and social experiences that can help displaced youth feel normal among their peers.

Pharos defines well-being as: optimism, self-confidence, happiness, vitality, having a sense of meaning, self-esteem, experiencing support from the environment and knowing how to deal with your own emotions. These points also share similarities with the UNHCR (1989) key recovery goals for displaced youth which were mentioned in Chapter 2. For example, we can relate the focuses of self-esteem and dignity, and support from the environment and social connections. Pharos focuses on these issues because,

> "*…the consequences of violence and traumatic experiences can be very serious for health. Good physical and mental health is important for activation and good integration. Pharos is committed to the quality and accessibility of prevention and care for asylum seekers, refugees, status holders and undocumented migrants,"* (Pharos, 2020).

As Anna described to me, the Well-being at School for refugees and newcomers project is part of the Healthy School approach (de 'Gezonde School' aanpak) and has five pillars on which it focuses its work. The first is policy; Pharos, along with Healthy School advisors, works with schools to identify consistent policies on well-being for students. They make sure that all school staff are familiar with and trained according to the written policy so that knowledge of the policy can easily be passed on to new school staff as necessary, and no one is unaware. The second pillar is education; they look at all the available interventions that can be offered in a classroom and make sure that the school is

implementing a comprehensive set of programs that address the socio-emotional learning and well-being of students alongside their regular classes. An example of these interventions would be TeamUp at School. The third pillar is the identification of issues; teachers are not health care workers, but they do see their students every day, and presumably are familiar with parents. Therefore, teachers are often the first who should be able to identify student issues, and then they can help the student find the proper support to address those issues. Pharos helps train teachers to be able to better identify issues and know how to refer students to appropriate health care professionals. The fourth pillar is the environment; Pharos works to promote better cooperation between teachers and parents. Since parents of displaced youth have different cultural backgrounds, use different languages, and are often used to different kinds of interactions with their child's school, Pharos helps teachers determine appropriate ways of communicating with and engaging parents when it comes to their child's schooling, as well as their well-being inside and outside of school. The fifth and final pillar is that Pharos addresses the well-being of teachers; working with displaced youth and their parents can also bring emotional stress to teachers, and Pharos wants to make sure that the teachers are also being supported.

When the Well-being at School for refugees and newcomers project is first brought to a new school, Pharos makes sure to speak with teachers, students, and parents to get a sense of the unique issues in that particular school. Drawing on their experiences and feedback received from schools all over the country, they are able to develop methods and trainings so that one school's experiences can help another school improve their own curriculum. Pharos has developed two main methods: Welkom op school (Welcome to School), a mentor method for International Linking Classes (ISK) and other secondary schools with newcomers, and Wereldreizigers (World Travelers), a teaching method for primary schools that contributes to the socio-emotional development of displaced youths in the classroom. These two methods largely address the topic of integration, and how teachers can better help their students get to know themselves and their classmates as they get used to life in the Netherlands.

When it comes to belonging, Pharos and the Well-being at School for refugees and newcomers project do not directly address belonging. However, when I asked Anna about the themes that they address in their trainings and how they relate to belonging, she said "*having a feeling of being excluded or not belonging leads to a lot of health problems actually, both mental health and other health problems."* She said, it is therefore important to work with teachers to address themes that help students to:

> *"[build bridges] between before and now, between home and school, between things they've lost and things they've gained, between the way friendship used to be and the way friendship is now, between games they used to play…feeling that they are still allowed to think about and feel a loss, but also experience joy in the new things…and giving a sense of belonging as well, actually, because when you address those themes, children can feel that they are not alone…and there are still a lot of similarities between you and other children."*

In this sense, Pharos sees the development of belonging as coming from understanding one's own similarities with other youth, feeling inclusion with other youth, and feeling these things within a safe space where you can be yourself. After all, as was discussed in Chapter 2, social relations that contribute to feelings of belonging are those established between same age and gendered youth encountered during the migration and settlement process (Wernesjö, 2014). Pharos does its best to make school the safe space that youth need to achieve successful development.

4.7 Conclusion

After describing how each of these NGOs handle the topic of belonging within the support they offer, it is noteworthy that most of them do not use the word 'belonging' to describe the various aspects of support that they are providing to displaced youth. What is clear, however, is that most of the missions and goals that these NGOs have set for themselves, regardless of the language they use, have both direct and indirect impacts on how displaced youth develop their belonging in the Netherlands. Belonging is tackled through the stimulation of social capital, both bonding and bridging. Belonging is stimulated through various approaches to language acquisition and interaction with native and host culture. Belonging is even addressed by the way participants are encouraged to tell stories about themselves and their interests.

In some cases, NGOs are focusing on belonging within the Netherlands as a whole, and in other cases they are focusing on belonging on a smaller scale, and with the groups that they are spending time with during programs. This is another tribute to how they perceive the importance of social capital. Some NGOs directly address personal and skills development for teenagers so that they can envision a future in the Netherlands, and some just focus on opportunities for children to play and enjoy spending time together without thinking about their stress or trauma.

Even though these NGOs have their differences, they are all working with the mission of supporting displaced communities in the Netherlands. However, this chapter has made it apparent that in many cases they support different elements of belonging. As displaced youth negotiate belonging, they are faced with numerous indicators that present different challenges and influences on their negotiations of belonging. The following chapter will discuss how NGOs observe displaced youth interacting with these indicators, and the different ways that they provide support as displaced youth negotiate their belonging alongside the influences of these indicators.

Chapter 5. Understanding the Complexities of Negotiating Belonging

Now that we understand the missions and goals of some of the NGOs that support displaced youth in the Netherlands, it is time to look at the next goal that this thesis seeks to tackle: understanding how NGOs perceive the negotiations that displaced youth consider when trying to develop belonging.

Chapter 2 of this thesis presented several theoretical concepts that identified the indicators that can influence the development of belonging (see Appendix 1). This chapter will review the most prominent indicators identified in the research data and discuss the complex contexts in which displaced youth interact with these indicators. The indicators are: Safety; Home; Place Attachments; Family; Language; Social Relationships and Building Community; Racism, Discrimination, and Segregation; and Political Status. These indicators will be looked at within the framework of Hopkins' (2013) points on understanding identity and belonging which were reviewed in Chapter 2. Each section will identify how the indicators fit into this framework.

This chapter will look at how different organization representatives I interviewed observed, or in some cases worked directly with, the negotiations that these indicators influence. This review will lead to a conclusion of how this thesis positions itself in the main debates this thesis considers around how displaced youth negotiate their belonging within the Netherlands.

5.1. Safety

The safety indicator does not easily fit into one of Hopkins' (2013) points for understanding identity and belonging, as it was originally discussed in the context of displacement, and not identity or belonging. However, it does highly impact how displaced youth negotiate belonging within new spaces. It was described in Chapter 2 that when displaced people are searching for a new home, one of the key indicators of a suitable new home is that it is a safe space (Kibreab, 1999). Therefore, to develop belonging in the Netherlands, it is important that displaced youth feel a sense of safety. Many of the NGOs I interviewed for this research directly recognize the importance of their role in providing a safe space, from Pharos' goal of ensuring that schools are safe spaces, to TeamUp's goal of creating a safe space for participants simply within their own activities.

The AZC is not always regarded as a safe space for youth; it is bureaucratic, life there is filled with uncertainties, and at least in the beginning, residents live among strangers. NGOs facilitating

programs within the AZC try to create a safe space within their sessions. As Cato from TeamUp at School said, "*What is needed for a sense of belonging, of course, is to know that you're safe and feel safe within a group."* Displaced youth in AZCs must consider which groups are the safe groups. Does their family provide safe space? What about their ethnic community within the AZC? The entire AZC community? What about the Dutch people they interact with? Everyone and everything is new, and with people always coming and going, negotiating safe space is very present.

I interviewed a TeamUp Volunteer Coordinator, Paul, who spends a lot of time facilitating TeamUp activities for youth in AZCs. When asked about the negotiation of safety in developing belonging, he said:

> *"I think that's also something that TeamUp plays a role in by providing structure. What does it mean to be there every week? What does it mean to be there at the same time? What does it mean to have the same faces? And for the children, that structure is also developing a sense of belonging to a place you are familiar with the whole concept, familiar with the people, with the games you play, with the group that you have. And you can feel belonging to this space, to this one hour of activities, and it's the same every week, which gives you belonging to the week, to the time you are spending in this place and create…more of a safety feeling for the children… having the space to express yourself in the first place, having a safe space, creating a safe space, is definitely a factor that would help, in theory, youth to express their needs, their wants, what are they craving, what do they want to do and how do they want to express themselves.*"

Paul is describing how the consistency of TeamUp, the fact that it is always present at the same time every week, and the fact that they try to keep consistency in facilitators for long periods of time, creates a safe space for the youth living in the AZC. Over time, participants know what to expect from TeamUp, so they can feel comfortable and safe spending time with that group.

Anoek from TeamUp at Schools also spoke about how youth express themselves within the context of safety and safe spaces. She said, "*once they open up in TeamUp, they also open up during the week…They calm down. And realize they are alright the way they are, and they don't have to show off or they don't have to be somebody else. They can be their self."* In other words, once youth can open up and be their self in one safe space, they can become more comfortable in other surrounding spaces as well.

School is often regarded as a safe space for displaced youth, especially when the AZC is not. Anna from Pharos spoke about how "*that's really nice to hear that they feel so welcome at school, but it's also sad to hear that…the other places aren't feeling so safe for them, because they often say, 'I wish we could stay longer in school because here they have nice toys and here all the people are kind.'"* This falls in line with Sirriyeh (2010) identifying school as one of the most important institutions that can help displaced youth develop belonging.

The negotiations that displaced youth face in their sense of safety are present in many of the other indicators that this thesis looks at, namely how the use of languages can affect feelings of safety. For example, Linda from Vrolijkheid said:

> "*I always try to imagine that I have to leave this country and go to a refugee camp somewhere in Syria and that somebody there would speak Dutch to me. That would be so much safer than somebody who did not speak Dutch to me...We have for instance a painter who is originally from Afghanistan, so he speaks a couple of languages…and when he is with me and when he speaks with them in their own language, they have an instant connection which I don't have…"*

This quote adds to the idea that safe spaces are better developed when there is consistency and familiarity. When a youth can recognize and identify with a characteristic within a space, that space becomes safer.

Further negotiations around the use of language will be discussed in a later section. To round off this one, it is apparent that NGOs highly consider safety when working with displaced youth, and making sure that they can develop feelings of safety, at least within their program group, and within the space where programs are facilitated.

5.2 Home

Home is an indicator that belongs in the geographical context of understanding one's own identity, according to Hopkins' (2013) points. However, as one works to build a new home and interpretations of home, the indicator also has a large influence on how one communicates, represents, and performs their cultural identities within a new space. Therefore, the home indicator exists within multiple contexts of understanding identity and belonging.

When displaced youth are finding their place in a new home, it is natural for them to consider their place in their old home. Therefore, when displaced youth think about belonging in the Netherlands, they also need to negotiate feelings of belonging to their homeland. What I discovered in my research is that how much the homeland is negotiated depends on the age of the displaced youth in question.

When I asked my interviewees about how they have observed the youth they work with talking about home, the homeland, or the desire to return to the homeland, most of them said that for their participants, home is connected to childhood. Linda from Vrolijkheid said:

> *"Yeah, the kids do talk about where they came from. But they do it – they miss their horse. They miss their car, their school. It's never, 'I miss Syria.' It's just the world that they had there – that's what they miss. That's what they talk about when they want to talk about it…They never talk about returning."*

Nick, my interviewee from Nidos and an expert on the circumstances of unaccompanied minors living in the Netherlands, also connected home to childhood when he said "*It's the memory of home. Interactions of childhood, playing, roaming in the woods. Some of them went to school and refer to their school friends, teachers, the funny things that happened in school."* These two quotes show how displaced youth consider their memories of a past home when thinking about a new home. What can be understood here is that if home is about the things that you had as a child, it could be possible to have those things in a new place, and then maybe that new place becomes more familiar, and homier. Both quotes refer to school, a further indication of how attending school in the host country can draw feelings of home to the host country, based on memories of school in the home country. As described in Chapter 2, Lems (2016) and Vigh and Bjarnesen (2016) discuss that the desire to return to a homeland can often be fulfilled by bringing feelings of the homeland to you in your new place. The use of memory can help achieve this.

Additionally, for many displaced youth, connection to the homeland is maintained by speaking their native language. However, in many cases it is also about maintaining a community of people who share your homeland. Linda from Vrolijkheid said that "*Nationality is important. They mostly always refer to themselves as being from where they came from."* I experienced this as well while working at the AZC in Nijmegen; the youth would always introduce themselves by telling you where they came from. Nick from Nidos finds this surprising. He said:

"*That's one thing that always surprises me. Most of them leave their country at 9 years old, they reach Europe by 15 or sometimes 17, and you still say you are an Eritrean…That sense of belonging stays, and is intact, and that surprises me. They say that they are Eritrean, they will always be Eritrean, and they will stick with their group."*

In many ways this connection is upheld by the family and parents, in obvious ways where the family will continue to prepare and eat traditional foods while living in the AZC and continue to celebrate holidays and festivals from their native culture. The NGOs I spoke with all encourage this celebration of homeland culture, and often participate in celebrations as well. There were several examples described, mostly consisting of hosting festival parties and cultural nights.

Aside from connections to the homeland that are influenced by family and parents, displaced youth also maintain connections to the homeland in more personal ways. As Paul from TeamUp shared:

"*It's these small expressions about dances they bring from their own culture, songs they want to put in a session, small games that they say 'yes we played it before like that' or suggesting a new game that they used to play, and explaining it to the group so that we play it together again."*

I witnessed this as well, that participants, especially teenagers, really enjoyed listening to music from their home country. A pair of siblings that I worked with showed us their Instagram account where they post videos of them singing traditional Kurdish music. This is how they choose to keep a connection to their homeland culture. However, that connection does not discount that they are also familiar with popular music, both Dutch, and American.

My data shows that while teenagers use memories of home and cultural connections to negotiate belonging, younger children do not experience memories of home the same way. Paul from TeamUp said,

"*If we talk about younger children, home is where they live right now. Home is where Mama and Papa are. Home is this small space where they live in the AZC. They still call it home…I haven't had any encounters with younger children expressing a want or a need to go back home or referring to home as a place other than The Netherlands."*

This quote suggests that because younger children do not have deep memories of their homeland, the childhood things that teenagers associate with the homeland, younger children associate with the Netherlands.

Displaced youth developing belonging negotiate whether home is a place in the past, or a place in the present. My data showed that an individual's position in this debate largely depends on their age. Teenagers who have memories from a past home can have deeper feelings of belonging toward a past home. However, for children, whose memories of home are often only in the present, it is easier for them to tie their belonging to their present home in the Netherlands. The question of whether displaced youth can claim belonging both to a past home and a present home lies in a discussion around the negotiation of place attachments, an indicator which will be discussed in the following section.

5.3 Place Attachments

The place attachment indicator fits into Hopkins' (2013) point of understanding identity and belonging through a geographical context, as the concept is deeply concerned with geography. However, it will become clear later in this section that place attachment can also be interpreted by others.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, Gustafson (2001), Kibreab (1999), and Sirriyeh (2010) all wrote about place attachment, and how people can be connected to places, both in rooted and routed contexts. Wilding (2012) disagreed, arguing that as people migrate, identity becomes deterritorialized, and not attached to a place. These concepts are relevant to the first debate that this chapter considers and will be addressed in that context in a later section.

My data showed that place attachments are more of a common negotiation for displaced youth than deterritorialization. Youth living in AZCs express place attachments in different ways, and sometimes to multiple places, both past homes and present homes, but they do maintain that their identities are attached to some place.

Nick from Nidos described the fluidity of place attachment when he said,

> *"If you leave at a very young age and you are very adaptive, and you stay at a refugee camp in Ethiopia, instead of Eritrea, you miss Ethiopia…they don't have any memory of their home country. And they say that this is home, The Netherlands. Or maybe a transit country is home. It's a very fluid concept for young people."*

Paul from TeamUp also talked about connections with transit places, furthering the idea that attachments can be built in places other than the homeland. He said:

> "*I gathered several cases where children were talking about their feelings, about how they came here, the number of countries they passed, the number of places they lived in, how that sometimes helped them in a positive way to learn different languages, to know different people. In other ways, how they found it a relief that they are now in the Netherlands compared to all the other situations they've been in…it was mostly compared to other bad situations, worse situations rather than what they are living here. And compared to that they seem to express their being in the Netherlands as a happy place and a good place.*"

These two quotes exemplify the complexities of place attachment, as displaced youth pass through so many different places. As suggested in the previous section, sometimes it is not as easy as balancing the past home and the present home; sometimes you must consider all the homes in between.

Linda from Vrolijkheid shared a story where she encountered participants wanting to express attachments both to a homeland, and to the Netherlands. She said:

> "*Without denying their country of origin they talk about Holland and make drawings about Holland. One time an older man made a drawing of his house. He did it meticulously with a ruler and a pencil and it was the house he lived in in Yemen. But I saw the same thing, one woman who was drawing canals in Holland which she saw, the same way…Even kids will draw the Dutch flag and Dutch things because they want to show us that they are very grateful, and they know these things from us, or they want to share their own flag and their own culture.*"

This suggests that participants can feel attachments to multiple places. While the use of *'their own culture'* indicates that the participant still feels a sense of identity and belonging to the past home, they are still developing feelings of attachment and belonging to their new home.

Sometimes the indicator of place attachment in negotiations of belonging can be contentious among peers. One person's experiences and negotiations of attachment and belonging do not equate to everyone's experiences and negotiations. This is clearly described in another story that Paul from TeamUp shared:

"*There was this encounter in one of the AZCs where the children were having the conversation between each other. A new child came to the group and was asking 'where are you from?' and the other child said, 'I'm from the Netherlands.' And they said 'well, but why are you here then?' And he said 'well, my first language is Dutch, I've only been to school in the Netherlands, I can't even speak the language of the country my parents come from, so I'm Dutch.' And it's charming to see how children can think of identity and nationality in a totally separate bubble than their parents or grandparents…The new child didn't accept that. The new child was still thinking - because it was a child who didn't speak Dutch and was having this conversation with the help of the other children, so the whole communication was different languages being spoken - and that child was just not taking it right now. He was like 'nah, you can't be here if you are Dutch. In an AZC.'*"

This is a profound example of one youth verbally indicating his feelings of belonging to the Netherlands, and another not understanding how someone who expresses belonging to the Netherlands also belongs in an AZC, as if it is not possible for asylum seekers to belong in the Netherlands, and it is not possible for people who identify as Dutch to belong in an AZC. This quote is also an example of how even one's own place attachments must be negotiated with other people's interpretations. The new boy does not accept the other child's claim that he can have attachment to the Netherlands while living in an AZC, even though that child is trying to make it clear that he can. This suggests that place attachments must be negotiated with interpretations by others, regardless of how personal place attachments are.

Paul also shared the following sentiment:

"When I think of belonging, it's also not something that, if I belong to the Netherlands, that doesn't mean I don't belong to any other place in the world. And I think it's the same concept that might be for everyone, or for children, to feel at ease in belonging. It's easy to belong to a place and to feel safe in this place, and active in this place, and productive. But that doesn't mean that if you belong to this place that you are going to lose your belonging to other places. So, to take this division between 'no, I either belong to where I came from, or here' away…then it makes everything easier, in my assumption."

Here, Paul skirts around deterritorialization, and indirectly addresses reterritorialization, a concept addressed in Chapter 2 that references the negotiation between attachments to the place where you are physically present, while also negotiating social, economic, and emotional relationships from the places where you are absent (Brun, 2001; Sampson & Gifford, 2010). In line with this concept, Paul is saying that displaced youth should be able to develop belonging within the Netherlands while also maintaining identification and belonging with the home country, or even another country they passed in between. After all, as Nick from Nidos said, "*Well, you can't lose something that you are in. It's not like they cross the Mediterranean Sea and then become something else."*

Displaced youth must negotiate belonging through attachment to multiple places because their experiences have brought them through multiple places. This is easier to do when one can adopt the idea that identity and belonging can be reterritorialized, and not tied to any one specific place. The NGOs I spoke with do not directly influence this negotiation among participants, as they only have interactions with participants in this one place. However, they clearly have observed many instances of how displaced youth express this negotiation. It would seem, belonging indeed becomes reterritorialized for displaced youth.

5.4 Family

Family is another indicator that does not clearly fit into one of Hopkins' (2013) points for understanding identity and belonging. Relationships with family can be a performance or a representation of one's self. Family is also an indicator that acts as an 'other,' interpreting belonging for an individual. The way your family sees you, the way your family wants to see you, deeply affects your sense of belonging. Therefore, the family indicator plays a very large role in displaced youth's negotiations of belonging.

My data shows that youth believe that they belong with their parents, particularly related to building a new home and understanding where home is. Nick from Nidos said, "*basically when they are referring to home, they are referring to their parents."* Paul from TeamUp had made similar observations, saying that "*I would see them saying 'well, it doesn't matter. It's where my parents are. And if my parents are here, I'm totally fine with being here. If my parents go to a different place, I just want to be with my family, my parents.'"*

Since their sense of belonging is so tied to their parents, parents' attitudes and feelings about places or communities deeply affect how youth will develop belonging within the same places or

communities. If a parent struggles, the child struggles. Even if the child wants to develop belonging, and actively tries to develop belonging, parents and family will often create a conflict in the negotiation of belonging. Both of these experiences were described in my interviews with TeamUp staff. Katia described the struggles that youth face when they try to develop belonging, even when their parents do not. She said:

> *"…what happens is that they feel at home and happy within the Netherlands. They have gone to school, they have regular community activities, but the parents don't feel at home. The parents don't feel happy. The parents have the incredible feeling of missing home. So, you get a child who feels good here and understands their opportunities, has adapted, speaks the language, and their parents haven't. So, there's a sort of dissonance there."*

In Katia's example, she assumes that even though youth struggle with their parents' positions in belonging, they still try to negotiate their own belonging based on other indicators. Paul describes an example where it is clear how parent attitudes toward developing belonging can disrupt the negotiation of belonging entirely. He said:

> *"I encountered once a father and a son in a bus. We were both going to the AZC, and the father was saying that, basically, 'we are so tired of this place. This place is not fair for humans. We've been living here for 4 years. We are still in an AZC and I don't even want the children learning anything here anymore because this is all worthless for their time.' And then the child said 'Yes, I don't even like Dutch. That's why I don't like to go to school. I'm learning these things, and I am never going to use them again in my life.'"*

This is an example of how youth adapt to their parents' views. We could assume that this child says he does not like Dutch and does not like going to school because he understands that his father thinks they are a waste of time. We do not know whether this boy was initially trying to develop belonging within the Netherlands. We can assume based on this interaction that if he was trying before, because of his father's sentiments, he no longer is.

Other interviewees talked about how NGOs need to incorporate parents into their activities and programming in order to combat the dissonance that Katia described. Anna from Pharos said "*I think always, especially with schools, they should always try to make a connection with the parents or the*

home situation. It's such an important one, to bridge the gap." Anoek from TeamUp at School agrees, saying that

> "…*it's always important that the parents know what their children are doing in school so that they are informed as much as they can be. But also to show them and let them experience how nice it can be to play. Because in a lot of cultures the parents aren't used to playing with the children. Playing is for children and not for adults."*

This brings up an interesting question about the silent expectations of integration. Anoek is describing what is normative in Dutch culture. There is therefore an expectation that Dutch cultural norms are best for children, and parents should adapt and assimilate accordingly. Ruth from Mexaena identified how this cultural struggle can directly affect the children. She said, "*I think the schools should then not only focus on support for children themselves, but also their parents. Because I think some parents have really high expectations for their children, and I think for the children that's really a burden as well."* What I understand from what Ruth is saying is that children are then faced with the negotiation of whether school should be approached through a Dutch cultural context in order to please teachers, or through a native cultural context in order to please parents. Ruth is assuming that if schools involve parents, parents can help their children with this negotiation. In saying so she is suggesting that parents should conform to Dutch norms in education, and only once youth are able to conform to Dutch norms in education will they feel like they belong. I believe that belonging and parental involvement in negotiations of belonging are much more complex than that. The family indicator is intersectional, present in many different aspects of youth's lives in their host country, influencing negotiations of many other indicators. This will become clear in subsequent sections.

The majority of NGOs I spoke with do recognize that parents have a great influence on their child's ability to develop belonging in the Netherlands. Many of my interviewees believe that if they can create more opportunities for parents to interact with their children in school and in program sessions, parents will be able to better understand the need for their children to feel like they belong where they are, and find new ways of supporting their children in this endeavor.

5.5 Language

This section discusses an indicator relevant to the context of communicating, representing, and preforming your identity or sense of belonging, according to Hopkins' (2013) points.

The use of language came up in many instances in Chapter 2. Ager and Strang (2008) wrote that integration works best when you know the local language. Several others wrote about how the use of native languages can help displaced people hold on to their sense of self and identity in a new place (Kohli, 2011; Wernesjö, 2014). My data showed that language is a major indicator in negotiations of belonging for displaced youth and was just as two-fold as the theoretical debates. Most asylum seekers arriving to the Netherlands have no knowledge of the Dutch language. Minors are required by the Dutch government to take Dutch language classes. I found in my data that youth embrace learning the Dutch language and use it often to communicate with each other. I see that this helps them strengthen friendships with peers. However, many interviewees also spoke about the struggles of breaking down the native language barrier.

In my experience working at the AZC in Nijmegen, there were some cases where youth would use their native languages while interacting in small groups. In most of the interactions I observed, Dutch was the primary language being used. Katia from TeamUp explained this when she said, "*…they know the way not to feel different is to learn the language, and even the accent. Different refugee children in different areas of Holland will actually speak with that accent."* Marie from ElanArt was also very clear when she said, "*One of the important things is to learn the language and to understand it in order to belong in the country."*

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out and the AZC closed its doors, TeamUp developed a game book for 'TeamUp at Home.' The book consisted of TeamUp games that the participants could play at home with their families during quarantine. The books were printed in Dutch, English, Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, and Tigrinya. When we went to distribute the books, almost every participant asked to have the book in Dutch. When we ran out of Dutch copies and had to give the participants an alternative language, they were disappointed. This showed that they embraced the Dutch language, felt comfortable with it, and in a way, identified with it.

Another situation I observed one day was a group of Venezuelan and Syrian girls playing together outside. They spoke to each other in Dutch, but when their game involved counting, the girls counted together in Spanish. I understood in this interaction that the girls from Venezuela had taught the girls from Syria how to count in Spanish, and they were happy to use those skills together. In most instances where I observed children using a language other than Dutch or their native language, it was for counting. That being said, younger participants were eager to count in their native languages during

games, as well as eager to teach all the other children to count in their own native languages. We would do rounds of games where each time we would count together in someone else's native language. What was interesting to see was that most of the children knew exactly who spoke which languages and would call on each other and encourage each other to use their different languages.

Paul also recognized this eagerness to use native languages during sessions. He said:

> "*I think identity comes with different factors. One of them is language, the use of language and how you can express your identity in your own language…whether it is by asking for a specific game, asking to do a specific movement some way, using their own terms to express, to count, or to say run, or stop."*

Based on this quote from Paul and my own observations, I understand how the youth at the AZC in Nijmegen can identify both with their native languages, and Dutch.

However, most of my interviewees had very different things to say about the use of language among program participants in other locations. Many interviewees saw language as a dividing factor that segregated participants from interacting with each other. For example, Linda from Vrolijkheid said, "*Turkish kids and non-Turkish kids don't play with each other. They don't talk to each other. They are completely different groups. And it has to do with language, I think."* Even Paul added to this sentiment, saying that

> "*…it's even sometimes clear in the session playing with TeamUp that you're playing a game with two teams and children start picking the team they want to be on based on language. And that these are their friends, and yes they are their friends, but they all speak the same language, and it's not a coincidence that they don't have friends from the other group who don't speak their same language."*

I assume that the difference between youth being comfortable speaking Dutch at the AZC in Nijmegen and not at all other AZCs comes from the variation in how long youth have been living in the Netherlands. When youth are newly arrived and not yet comfortable speaking Dutch, they do not communicate with peers who do not speak their language. When they can speak Dutch, they can speak with anyone who speaks Dutch. Therefore, Dutch is the unifier that helps the youth build relationships and community with diverse peers in the AZC. Nick from Nidos recognizes that, "*Among themselves they*

typically speak their local language. But across groups they speak in Dutch most of the time." Marie from ElanArt adds, "*It is easier for them to just speak in their own language, but when we join [as a group] we make jokes and say, 'hey, we are supposed to speak Dutch, we also want to understand,' and it's also very important that they learn the language."*

Tying the language indicator back to the family indicator, the influence of family members and parents on the use of language is another factor that displaced youth must negotiate when developing belonging. Ruth from Mexaena noted that "*Some families are really traditional, and they don't want [their children] to lose their [native] language skills, which I understand, but at the same time I feel that these youngsters are limited from Dutch society."* This suggests that family is usually the indicator that influences how quickly youth will pick up languages, find use in languages, and embrace the use of multiple languages, native and Dutch.

Anna from Pharos aligned with Ager and Strang (2008) when she spoke about how language is one of the indicators of successful integration into Dutch society. She said:

> *"I know from other countries that over there they do not have the one or two years we have here in which the children have a separated year in which they learn the language, and even for secondary school it's two years…in secondary school it's called ISK, and those are often really situated in a building somewhere else, so it's really apart from the Native Dutch children for two years…while in primary school it's most often one or two language classes within the school, and they start to integrate as soon as possible, so as soon as the child has gained some level of Dutch, he or she can already follow some lessons with the rest of the school…but for the secondary schools it's really difficult. And you always hear that when they are finished with the ISK and have to go to the regular schooling that it brings a lot of problems and the regular schools, especially secondary schools, they suddenly have three or four children of a refugee background in the school and they don't know how to do it. So sometimes those children are completely lost while before on the special school it was better for their sense of belonging."*

Anna suggests that displaced youth with Dutch language skills will integrate better into Dutch classrooms, and by association, Dutch society. However, the segregation that is fostered with the separation of Dutch language lessons does not help youth develop a sense of belonging within the Netherlands. The language indicator is thus intersectional, particularly with the segregation indicator. This will become clear in a following section.

The language indicator shows how displaced youth must negotiate which languages to use, when to use which, and with whom. Some NGOs, like TeamUp, try to reduce the consideration of this negotiation by de-emphasizing the use of language in their program interactions and focusing on non-verbal activities. None of the NGOs I spoke with focused on language learning. However, all made it clear that language does influence how participants interact with each other and facilitators, particularly those who work with displaced youth in schools.

5.6 Social Relationships and Building Community

Social Relationships and Building Community are two indicators that can communicate, represent, and perform identity and belonging in the context of Hopkins' (2013) points. The social relationships and communities that one chooses to be a part of are a representation of identity and belonging. However, these indicators can also be analyzed in the context of how others interpret your identity and belonging, as the people you choose to associate with and the communities you want to interact with will influence how others interpret your identity and belonging. Therefore, social relationships and building community are two indicators that have a lot of influence in all the debates around negotiating belonging. Most prominently, these two indicators influence how displaced youth build their social capital. After all, social capital is the relationship between people and their social networks (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014). This section looks at bonding social capital as developing social relationships with fellow participants in support programs and bridging social capital as building community with people outside of the displaced peer group.

Displaced youth come in to contact with many different people once they arrive to the Netherlands. They live in an AZC with other displaced people, some from their same home country, and some from other countries. They interact with Dutch government officials, COA staff, legal workers, teachers, and volunteers who facilitate programming offered by NGOs. There is a lot of diversity in the people that they encounter. As discussed in Chapter 4, many of the NGOs that work with displaced youth concern themselves with supporting how participants navigate all the available social networks and develop personal relationships. This is incredibly important considering the discussion in Chapter 2 on how building friendships and positive relationships with community members helps youth develop belonging (Lems, 2016; Sirriyah, 2010). Before this analysis can address how NGOs stimulate social capital, it will first discuss in further detail how the various NGOs support the development of social relationships.

The language indicator is very present for displaced youth who are forming social relationships. As has already been discussed, a common language makes it easier to form relationships. One of TeamUp's eight main themes that they address with participants is the development of friendships. Paul connected the influence of language on how TeamUp participants develop friendships when he said:

> "*I think there are different factors also thinking about why children in a certain location would speak better Dutch than all the other locations. And mostly that would mean that these children have been living in the Netherlands for a longer time and have been living in that specific location for a longer time. So, the interaction between children is also based on the fact that they have been living with each other for years now, going to the same school, playing the same play yard, and for them it's not only a matter of language, but also a matter of having the same circumstances of living, the same atmosphere they live in, and playing together for years. So, they are basically childhood friends who grew up together, and speak Dutch perfectly, in lots of the cases, better than their mother tongue, or supposed mother tongue. So, yes, you see then that you have different ethnicities playing together, going well together as a group. And then it's not language based."*

What he is saying is that the amount of time that you spend with someone, regardless of your similarities and differences, improves your chances of being able to identify with another person. When 100 minors live together at the AZC in Nijmegen for an extended period of time, they build social relationships like anyone would build social relationships with childhood friends. They speak, they find commonalities, they share interests and hobbies, they build bonds, and then they can feel a sense of belonging with each other. This highlights how TeamUp focuses on bonding social capital when they influence the development of friendships and social relationships. Commonalities established with AZC peers helps create feelings of inclusion within the TeamUp space.

What I found is that the majority of support programming offered to displaced youth focuses on bonding social capital. Cato from TeamUp at School addressed this when she said:

> "*Within the group we are [thinking about integration], totally. You could say it's inclusion more…The integration with Dutch children is not the main focus right now, no. However, the newcomer education has a goal to make sure that the child is ready to go into regular education within a year or max a year and a half…which kind of makes it the goal of the school to make*

sure that a child not only integrates with enough Dutch language to go to regular, but also learns to function in a group. And TeamUp helps with that, for sure."

In other words, Cato is taking the position that TeamUp facilitates bonding social capital because she believes that once displaced youth are bonded, they are more quickly prepared to integrate. Paul explained this position a bit further when he said:

"[TeamUp] helps [participants] develop skills…about listening, active listening, and problem solving, and accepting losing, and encouraging others and each other. So, I think there are a lot of soft skills behind games and the small interactions that the children do have in TeamUp. When they say sorry to each other, or when they say good job, or when they give high fives, it's already giving something as soft skills to the children…I think there are a lot of things that are just basic needed human skills that will make your life easier no matter where you live. And…if a child knows how to deal with their own emotions, then no matter what the situation they are encountering, the emotion that they have, and if they know how to deal with it…how to be more resilient to it, and more adapting to dealing with these situations, [it] would help them in interacting with everyone around them, and then no matter if they are in the Netherlands or otherwise, that is already a step further."

Paul is talking about how TeamUp helps participants develop soft skills during their bonding, and these soft skills will eventually lead to participants' abilities to build bridging social capital outside of the TeamUp setting. Katia described the way that TeamUp uses their focus on bonding social capital to develop connections with the community outside of TeamUp. She said:

"[Participants] feel a sense of belonging to the TeamUp group. And that's a start, because then you see them outside of TeamUp and they say, 'oh he's my friend from TeamUp so…he's also my friend when I walk to school.' So, I find TeamUp has a rippling effect…I can give you an example of a child who changed AZC and was doing TeamUp and then found it again at the new AZC. So, that was finding his sense of belonging or something that he could identify to. Like 'oh! It's here too! The same TeamUp and the same loving facilitators.'"

While these quotes show how TeamUp focuses on bonding social capital, the NGOs that I spoke with that work with teenagers and young adults do have a hand in supporting the building of bridging social capital. This is mostly done through networking and supporting the development of harder skills and talents. As was discussed in Chapter 2, Allsopp and Chase (2019) write that the well-being of young people has become attached to their future selves, and that identifying aspirations and dreams within a host country helps them develop belonging within that host country. Ruth from Mexaena talked about how her NGO supports these efforts. She said:

> "*I do know that there was one youngster who basically wanted to work as a carpenter and there was one Dutch volunteer who knows a carpenter in Utrecht, so she wanted to connect them…But basically, you really make use of your resources. The main thing we achieve is for them to get in touch with Dutch society, and otherwise they would not connect with locals that easily, I guess. But we are trying to achieve that because that's really important, not just to provide them with information but also try to help them get a step ahead."*

Marie from ElanArt also talked about how their main focus is to discover talents among participants, and then connect those participants to other groups or organizations who can further help them develop those skills. The building of bridging social capital which these two quotes describe is what connects displaced youth to building community outside of their AZC social groups.

In fact, organizations like ElanArt and Mexaena actively work to build community for participants. For example, Ruth explained that:

> *"…we also organize once every two weeks an event in De Voorkammer in Utrecht. It's called the Eritrean coffee ceremony. So, that's for them a nice way to get in touch with a lot of different people and it's not necessarily a set program. So, they can do whatever they like, just hang out, play some games, and I really feel like that really works."*

This quote describes how community is being built within the greater community of Utrecht. Locals, asylum seekers, and refugees can all interact with each other and build community together. Community building through bridging social capital can lead to stronger feelings of belonging with Dutch locals. Nick from Nidos tied this sentiment back to the language indicator once more when he said:

> "*You don't have to speak perfect Dutch [to belong]. It's just like next door, an elderly lady is carrying a lot of groceries, and you come and grab it and put it in her house for her…And also, belonging…is being a part of a community, a human community…Belonging is solidarity. That is the exit point for me."*

Nick is suggesting that belonging is achieved when you have a supportive connection with the people around you, regardless of where they are from. Paul from TeamUp said something to a similar affect when he said:

> *"For me it's just that you belong to a community when you are active in that community. So, you belong to a place when you have a role in that place, and when you have an active part in doing something within the place that you are. So when you have an interaction with your neighbors, when you are part of the small community in your building, when you have a role to play in society, when you feel like you are adding a value to the place that you are in, then I feel that you are belonging to that place. And when you are not doing any of these things, then I feel that there is less feeling of belonging to that place."*

What Paul is saying here is that belonging to a community goes hand in hand with belonging to a place. If you can achieve belonging within a community, then by default you can also feel like you belong in the physical place in which your community exists. Therefore, in the debate on whether belonging is about belonging to a physical place or to a community, it is apparent that the two influence each other. It also becomes apparent then, that bonding and bridging social capital directly influence each other.

This section suggests that when NGOs can help displaced youth develop friendships with peers, they help foster soft skills that youth need to feel like they have a safe community in which they belong (bonding social capital). Once this safe space is created, it is easier for NGOs to help displaced youth develop harder skills that will lead to friendships with locals, and feelings of belonging within the greater community (bridging social capital).

5.7 Racism, Discrimination, and Segregation

This section discusses indicators relating to the context of how others interpret the identity and belonging of displaced youth, according to Hopkins' (2013) points. In Chapter 2, Kibreab (1999) is

referenced as having researched how racism and discrimination deeply affect how displaced youth present their identities and develop belonging in any space. My data also shows that these indicators, as well as segregation, are very present in the lives of displaced youth and the negotiations they face when developing belonging.

Many of my interviewees described the AZC itself as being a very racist, discriminatory, and segregated place. Linda from Vrolijkheid even said that "*the discrimination in refugee centers is the most anywhere."* This means that before displaced youth can even worry about negotiating racism, discrimination, and segregation with natives of their host country, they must worry about these indicators within their home in the AZC. An interesting pattern I found in my data was that almost all my interviewees who spoke about these indicators spoke about the divide between Syrians and Eritreans. Linda first referenced it on a less specific scale when she said, "*[Arabs] learn from the parents that African kids are dirty. African kids learn from their parents that [Arab] kids are stupid, so they don't play. It's what they learn from their parents."* Nick from Nidos said something to a similar effect when he said:

> "*They would say the Syrians are more educated than the Eritreans. And the Afghans are better than them…we have to fight this perception that Eritreans have a low IQ. It was like a stamp on the face. One person said it and suddenly everyone in the Eritrean group has a low IQ*."

Both quotes would suggest that youth arrive to the AZC with prejudices against certain groups of people before getting to know them as individuals.

Family has a very strong influence on the prejudices that influence racism, discrimination, and segregation among displaced youth. Linda from Vrolijkheid shared a story where the prejudices instilled from parents were about gender. She said:

> *"[A former participant] shared a story that his parents told him not to trust white girls. Definitely not to trust them. So, [female program facilitators are] there knocking on the door, asking if they want to come and paint, and you have this boy who says 'nooo I'm not trusting those girls.'"*

I also noticed in my time at the AZC in Nijmegen that the boys and girls would avoid holding hands and being on teams with each other. I observed participants wanting to be on teams with the others that they were better friends with. Participants were always more open and comfortable playing when they joined sessions with another friend.

That being said, Paul from TeamUp told a story that perfectly describes how family can influence prejudices that are about race and ethnicity. He said:

> *"…A child was once crying in a circle, and there were two girls, and one girl didn't want to hold the hand of the other girl. And the two girls come from different ethnicities and have different skin tones, and one of the children said 'no, I'm afraid if I touch her, my skin will become similar to hers.' And it was also something to look at, why children would think that in the first place, where does it come from?...Basically, we talked with the parents. The parents explained to her that 'no, it was a joke when we said it. It doesn't work like this, look' and then the mother held hands with the other girl and said 'see, it's all fine' and then the girl was like, 'okay, now I can,' and then they started playing together again in the group."*

It seems that in this situation, ultimately, the mother had no issue with her child playing with the little girl who was different, regardless of whether her statement was initially intended as a joke. This scenario, therefore, shows us that parental influence on prejudices can be combatted.

TeamUp tries to combat sentiments of racism, discrimination, and segregation of all forms in their programming, and not just when they facilitate activities that address their theme of bullying. Anoek from TeamUp at School said:

> *"Because they see the children all day and all week, [teachers] have that trust with the students, a bond, so they can say, 'okay, now you are a boy, but you're on a team with this girl, even if you don't like it.' Or, 'if you're Syrian, you're on the same team as an Eritrean'…Some children said 'I didn't play with that boy or that girl because I thought she wouldn't like me, but now we've been on a team and now we even play outside of school or during the breaks.'"*

Facilitating experiences where children with different backgrounds play with each other helps to combat the stereotypes that parents set at home. School is a place where youth can learn that their differences with each other do not have such a great impact, and they should be able to form friendships with each other without being concerned that they are going to get bullied by other participants.

Racism, discrimination, and segregation are also considered while displaced youth negotiate belonging with local Dutch people, though my interviewees were not able to speak as much to this since most programming does not actively promote integration with Dutch peers. Linda from Vrolijkheid said:

> "*Sometimes I invite Dutch kids to come to the AZC. They come with their parents because I wouldn't let them come alone…It's the parents that make the separations…So depending on what the Dutch kids have heard from their parents, whether they think the other kids are sad, that's what they have in their mind and that acts as a barrier. If the parents have told their Dutch kids that these kids are exactly normal and they want to play Minecraft together, go play, then the barrier would be different. It wouldn't be a thing."*

Anoek from TeamUp at School said:

> "*Dutch children are shy toward newcomer children, and the other way around. They're shy and they don't understand each other sometimes. But if you play TeamUp, you see that they are thinking 'oh, he's very good at football!' or 'He's very fast and I want him to be on my team!' And then all those boundaries go away. And that's a good thing for the integration.*"

These quotes suggest that if youth can discover common interests and hobbies, differences in ethnicity, race, gender, etc. should not disrupt their ability to play together, create friendships, build community, and develop belonging together. In the cases where these differences are an issue, it is largely because parents have made these differences an issue.

The NGOs I spoke with do try to combat racism, discrimination, and segregation by fostering inclusion in their programming, and creating a welcoming and accepting space for displaced youth to interact with each other. As Paul from TeamUp said "*I think belonging is a very important sense and feeling for everyone. So, if I belong, then the people next to me or who interact with me would find it easier to belong as well."* The challenge for NGOs is to determine how to foster that sense of belonging. Katia from TeamUp addressed these challenges when she said:

> "*A lot of volunteers think they want to help and do something good, so they are coming with the concept of helping, which is not wrong in itself, but it creates an unbalance in the relationship…Even our facilitators who think 'oh, poor children. Let's do something for the refugee children.' So…it creates a certain savior, helper, kind of roll. And then they're not meeting on an equal ground."*

This suggests that NGOs should be consciously mindful of all the roles that volunteers and facilitators play while providing support to youth.

Nick from Nidos also recognizes that people do want to be helpful and try their best to support displaced youth and make them feel welcome in the ways that they know how. He said:

> *"…There are brave Dutch people who really cross boundaries and try to connect with the kids, giving free language courses in the AZCs. Some of them forge really good friendships with the children. And some of them really help them and contribute to the process of family reunification in terms of logistics, transportation, money, etiquette. And there are wonderful stories from the community as well, and from the caregivers."*

Linda from Vrolijkheid said that "*Belonging is about being accepted. That's the main thing… I can't speak for everyone but generally what I see is that if they feel welcome, then they find their new home very quickly…They are just very grateful that they can stay here in Holland."* In this case, Linda is exemplifying how the NGOs do their best to make the youth feel welcomed. For example, Linda told a story about how when she does art with the young residents of the AZC where she works, she makes a point of displaying the art on the walls in the common spaces around the AZC. She said:

> *"What I find, to go to the belonging part, is that if we can communicate to them that this is them leaving something there in the AZC they get very excited with the feeling that 'this is something I made, a painting. This is going to hang here. It has my name. It's going to hang here, and someone else will see that I was here.' It makes a very big difference."*

In other words, Vrolijkheid tries to create a welcoming and accepting atmosphere by providing something tangible for displaced youth to see that they have a place where they can contribute; a place that recognizes them as being a part of that place.

Some interviewees spoke about ways that they could further combat racism, discrimination, and segregation. Katia from TeamUp started this conversation off simply when she said:

> "*I think our role as facilitators is to mediate safety…where I can address them in non-judgmental ways. So, without scolding one or defending the other. And finding ways that the children are able to cooperate, and then suddenly they forget which group they belong to…So you give them*

a common goal. Like the game of building a tower as quickly as possible, suddenly they are so excited about the task that they forget who they are with."

This is a simple way of combatting these indicators during sessions in peer to peer interaction. However, many of the stories shared in this section suggest that these sentiments are often fostered by parents and community members. Therefore, Katia also talked about furthering involvement of parents in TeamUp sessions because she assumes peer to peer interaction among parents should also be able to help reduce the stereotypes that parents hold and pass on to their children. She said:

"A Syrian child doesn't want to play with an Eritrean child. So, you have those very clear, different backgrounds. That's a big challenge. And that doesn't necessarily come from the child, but form the community, their environment. So, I definitely think that that's one way we could deepen our intervention. Invite parents and do sessions once a week for parents. Once a month where they come and see what we do."

Anna from Pharos believes that we need to combat these indicators within the school environment as well. She said:

"Having a feeling of being excluded or not belonging leads to a lot of health problems actually, both mental health and other health problems. So in that sense, for one thing, I would really wish that all schools would focus on the topic not only of integration but also discrimination, racism, integration, topics of influences of where you come from, your skin color, what your belief is, what your sexual orientation is, just the influence of that on how you develop. The way people look at you and the way people react to you because of your sexual orientation or because of your skin color has so much influence on how the child develops, especially at a young age when the brains are still developing."

These quotes suggest that in an ideal world, TeamUp would be working with parents and youth to reduce the racism, discrimination, and segregation at home in the AZC, and other programs, such as the ones Anna describes, would be working to make the school a safer space, combatting these indicators and supporting youth in embracing their many diverse identities.

Linda from Vrolijkheid also talked about how we need to create spaces where diversity is accepted, and where NGOs and other groups can support displaced youth while they come to terms with their diversity. She said:

> "*I met young women and men who have the same issues trying to find out in teenage years which gender they belong to…And then they face living in these camps with these ideas which are still very similar to the ideas of the country of origin, which are usually not very open. So you have this country here, Holland, and they know this is an extremely open country where you can be free and be who you are, and you come to this country, and you can't, because you get beat up in the center where they live."*

She went on to say that it is important to have diverse volunteers who represent many different identities, including differences in gender identity and sexual orientation, so that participants can see examples of how the Netherlands can be a safe space for them, regardless of their identity. If NGOs can foster contact between diverse groups of people and the displaced youth, hopefully the youth and their parents can learn to be more open and accepting of diversity as well.

Katia from TeamUp explains from her own perspective why addressing racism, discrimination and segregation is important. She said:

> "*It's always about meeting the unknown. So once you connect on a human level, and the fears, assumptions, or biases you have from another, then you start creating a sense of belonging because you've moved beyond the fears, assumptions and biases that you've met on a human level. And TeamUp helps with that."*

Displaced youth are faced with racism, discrimination, and segregation in many different areas of their lives in the host country; at home in the AZC, at school, and among local community members. All the NGOs I spoke with try their best to reduce negotiations of racism, discrimination, and segregation by creating more welcoming and accepting environments, both at the AZC and at school, so the burden of these topics are not as heavy in all the spaces that should be safe for youth to develop belonging. NGOs achieve this by encouraging diverse teams, encouraging the mixing of language and ethnic groups, and involving parents whenever necessary to explain away prejudices. There is still a lot of room for

improvement, but various organizations are already thinking about ways that they can provide further support to combat these indicators.

5.8 Political Status

One of the important indicators that displaced youth must negotiate but ultimately have very little control over, is that of political status. I did not originally include political status as an independent indicator in my operationalization chart, as I understood political status as a context within which displaced youth had to negotiate all the other indicators. However, during data collection it became clear that my interviewees considered it to be an independent indicator that can be looked at through the context of how others interpret the identity and belonging of displaced youth, according to Hopkins' (2013) points. Therefore, it is the last indicator influencing negotiations of belonging that this chapter will consider.

The majority of youth in AZCs arrive to the Netherlands as asylum seekers with no official status or permission to hold residency in the Netherlands. The amount of time that they wait to receive their status can vary from a couple of weeks, to several years. Several interviewees brought up concerns about how uncertain political status affects the development of belonging. For example, Ruth from Mexaena said:

> *"…I also do a lot of work on integration and participation of newcomers, and what I have always heard from newcomers themselves is that as long as they haven't received or haven't been granted asylum, they can't start learning the language or focusing on becoming part of this new society because they still worry about their status…What is interesting is that some have really built their whole social networks in Utrecht but they are not official residents yet so they are just stuck in limbo…waiting for the Dutch government to grant them their asylum…I feel like it's tricky because they might be really hopeful, and you want to provide your network or skills, but you don't want to mislead them. There should remain hope, but they should also be realistic."*

This quote addresses the uncertainty that displaced people live with, in a limbo where they do not know whether they will be granted the permission by the government to stay in the Netherlands. This uncertainty makes it very difficult to develop belonging, because what if they develop belonging, and

then are forced to leave? The fact that they have already developed belonging somewhere where they are not allowed to stay can then be detrimental to their process of making a home elsewhere.

While Ruth speaks mainly of older teenagers and other participants she has worked with, other interviewees talked about how even young children are very aware of what is going on with their political status. Katia from TeamUp said:

> *"The children, especially in AZCs where children have no status, they know that children come and go, or they've been taken away, or sent away. And you also feel it in the children sometimes when things are going on in their own procedure, or the child was more agitated or more emotional or more aggressive."*

Here Katia is describing how awareness of changes within political procedures around status really affects how a participant might behave in a session, highlighting the incredible influence that the uncertainty has on the well-being of a youth. Linda from Vrolijkheid adds:

> "*…Of course, they want to stay here. That's their main goal and their parents' main goal, and they see their parents working as hard as they can to get a notice from the government that they are allowed to stay here. And it's all their parents think about. But they get that. 'This country, where if the country accepts us, then we belong'…the only thing these kids want is to have Dutch nationality."*

I did not have any interactions with program participants where they talked about their political status, so I am not sure whether achieving Dutch nationality is the actual end goal for displaced youth. However, what I understand as the point that Linda is trying to make is that youth are aware of their status, and understand that the government should give them permission to belong in this country before they can fully activate their efforts to develop belonging within the Netherlands.

None of the NGOs that I spoke with have any direct influence on the political status of displaced youth. In fact, most of them intentionally avoid speaking about topics related to political status, because they want to create a time in the week where youth should not have to worry about it, and only focus on being children, playing, and having a good time. It is important for facilitators working with displaced youth to be aware of their struggles when it comes to how their political status affects their negotiations of belonging. While some people think that obtaining political status is the ultimate form of belonging,

most agree that it is important to develop belonging within your community in smaller ways, even before the permission to stay is granted.

5.9 Conclusions in the Debates about Negotiating Belonging

The eight groups of indicators that influence negotiations of belonging were explored in this chapter and analyzed in isolation so that the unique qualities and nuances of their influences could be thoroughly understood. However, the overall analysis made it clear that these indicators are intersectional and influence each other in many ways. Some examples were how safety can be influenced by family and use of language. Family influences place attachments, language, social relationships, and prejudices. Language influences social relationships, community building and segregation.

It also became clear that each of these indicators are present in many different contexts of youth's lives; at home, at school, and in NGO program sessions. Considering the complexities of the concept of belonging itself, it was to be expected that intersections of indicators in a variety of spaces would need to be considered in order to fully understand the negotiations that displaced youth must face while developing belonging within the Netherlands. The following sub-sections will conclude how the complexities of the above indicators lead to this thesis' position in the three main debates about how displaced youth negotiate their belonging in the Netherlands.

5.9.1 Belonging: To Place or Community

The first debate considered in this analysis is on whether the concept of belonging is tied to physical place, or to community. Discussions around place attachments determined that reterritorialization was the most appropriate concept to describe the ways that displaced youth negotiate their place attachments alongside the community relationships they build and maintain in the multiple places they have been routed through, suggesting that belonging can be both about belonging to a place and a community.

In discussions around social relationships and community building it was further exemplified how belonging to place and belonging to community go hand in hand. Regardless of your past or present place attachments, if you can achieve belonging within a community, then by default you can also feel like you belong in the physical place in which your community exists.

Therefore, I take the position that displaced youth should be able to develop belonging both to places and communities. I believe that while developing belonging within a new host country it is easier to first develop belonging within a community, and the sense of belonging to the place will follow.

5.9.2 Belonging: Achieved or Granted

The second debate is very tied to the first and is about whether belonging needs to be sought after by the individual, or whether it needs to be granted by the group or community within which one is trying to belong. The indicators we must consider in this debate are those that are looked at both in the contexts of how an individual communicates, represents and performs their identity and belonging, as well as how an individual's identity and belonging are interpreted by others. The data discusses both possibilities. Ultimately there are more considerations and more negotiations involved in how others interpret belonging. While individuals are actively responsible for their own development of belonging within peer groups, the fact that parents and family have such a large influence on who they would rather their children belong with surely indicates that others, even those with whom you would presumably naturally belong, can determine where you belong for you. The political status that you hold is granted by others. Therefore, ultimately, it is others that need to grant you belonging to a place.

My position in the debate on whether belonging is achieved or granted concerns the same duality as the debate on whether sense of belonging is tied to a community or a place. I think that it is possible for displaced youth to achieve their own sense of belonging within their community. Their success is challenged mostly by family who feel like they have control over which communities their children belong within. However, belonging to a place is granted by governments and political status. The difference here is that in the debate on belonging concerning community versus place, it has been concluded that it is easier for displaced youth to first establish belonging within a community, and then they can establish belonging with the place. In this debate on whether belonging is achieved or granted, where achieving belonging is more easily done with the community and granted belonging comes with the place, it is often more important that belonging is first granted, and then it can, at least less stressfully and more certainly, be achieved. This suggests that displaced youth should first have their belonging to place granted, and then they can achieve belonging with the community, which contradicts my position in the first debate. However, this is not an irreconcilable conflict. The data discussed in this chapter does present that it is possible for someone to achieve belonging to a place before belonging is

granted to them. However, they run the risk of achieving belonging in a place where they will never be granted belonging.

5.9.3 Belonging: Bonding or Bridging Social Capital

The third debate is about social capital and understanding whether belonging to the place is better established when belonging to the community is developed through bonding social capital (building relationships with displaced peers) or bridging social capital (building relationships with other groups within the larger community around you). My initial operationalization chart (Appendix 1) considered social capital as an individual indicator. Ultimately, I found that social capital is more of a contextual lens through which to look at the negotiations of belonging.

Throughout this chapter, interviewees spoke about many instances where they watched participants struggle with indicators that affect social capital. They struggled with whether they should be embracing Dutch culture, maintaining their ethnic cultures and family traditions, and whether it was okay to do both. What became apparent is that it is easier for displaced youth to maintain bonding social capital. However, it is limiting to only build bonding social capital. Belonging is optimally achieved through building both types of social capital. Displaced youth need to build bonding social capital and maintain connections with their peers and their ethnic communities, because those are the people who will support them in their times of need. However, bridging social capital and developing relationships with the greater community is important so that they can become educated and have access to the resources that are meant to lead to career and financial success.

To sum up the position that this thesis takes in the social capital debate, I believe that building both bonding and bridging social capital will lead to optimal well-being and belonging for displaced youth within a host country. My data makes it clear that in a welfare state like the Netherlands it is easier to achieve bridging social capital if you have already achieved bonding social capital. Luckily, the NGOs working with younger displaced youth focus on bonding social capital, so that by the time children are older they are ready to work with programs that better facilitate the development of bridging social capital.

Chapter 6. The Importance of Encouraging Agency

The final sub-question that this thesis has sought to address regards the significance of NGOs encouraging agency for displaced youth. In Chapter 2 it was discussed that governments and institutions are largely concerned with the well-being of displaced youth, but these groups hardly consider the needs, aspirations and behaviors of the youth when creating policy around their well-being. Chapter 2 also showed that social science researchers recognize the importance of encouraging agency among youth to bring their voices into the policies that concern them. Agency describes the capacity an individual has to make their own choices. When youth feel like they are in charge, they become guardians of their own success and well-being (Kohli, 2011). When displaced youth possess agency and the ability to contribute to society, they more easily develop belonging within society (Carlton, 2015).

Through my research I sought to understand how NGOs working with displaced youth regard the importance of agency, as well as in what ways they encourage and support the development of agency for their participants. What I found is that they mainly focus on the leadership and empowerment aspects of agency that come with participation in NGO programs. Anna from Pharos made her position clear when she said:

> "Y*ou really need to ask the children what is important for them and how they can strengthen their resilience. If we didn't speak with the refugee children, we wouldn't know that all those themes…were so important to them. And because of that, we made a method addressing those themes, but you only know it when you speak with them. So, yeah, I think it's a major importance to learn about their world and what's important to them, and what they need."*

This quote suggests that youth feel supported when others ask them what they want, and what they need. Asking youth these questions gives them the agency to change their circumstances; in the case of Pharos, to change what types of support NGOs offer them.

Paul addressed TeamUp's consideration of agency when he posed the following questions:

> "*How do we create that the program is not only for, but with the teenagers, and with the children, and they feel that it's also something they can play a part in and it's not presented for them? It's something that they can also play with and make it their own and make it more comfortable for them to be a part of?*

By asking these questions, Paul is exemplifying that like Pharos, TeamUp is also thinking about agency, and how they can encourage youth to embrace their agency. However, TeamUp encourages agency by asking the questions that allow participants to feel ownership over the programs that have already been designed for them.

TeamUp and Vrolijkheid both facilitate ownership by asking participants what they want to do during programs, what activities they enjoy, and what games they like to play, so that sessions can be designed with input from the participants. When I was facilitating programs at the AZC in Nijmegen, at the end of each session we would ask the participants what they did and did not enjoy about each session, and if they have ideas for what they would like to do or achieve in following sessions. Linda from Vrolijkheid said, "*Their eyes light up when we ask them what they want to do."* I found the same reactions during TeamUp, which suggests that regardless of how it affects policy, providing spaces for displaced youth to embrace their agency through supporting feelings of ownership over program spaces has a positive effect on their well-being. According to Carlton (2015), feeling in control over the TeamUp or Vrolijkheid spaces can help youth feel in control of developing their belonging within that space.

Further than providing opportunities for participants to have some control and ownership over their program space, NGOs also focus on the development of leadership skills to encourage agency among displaced youth. Katia from TeamUp addressed this when she asked the following questions:

> *"We have young adolescents who are 17 and 18 who are almost going to 19 who are too old to be children participating. So how can we start training the youth to become themselves facilitators? How can we engage more peers, or older children, even in the younger session, to help us with mobilizing? So, how can we give more and more roles to the youth participating in our sessions to develop their leadership skills, their facilitation skills?"*

Katia answered her own questions when she said:

> *"Self-agency…where we see it now in TeamUp in particularly, is suddenly seeing a child who recognizes a game or a song and then wants to show something to others, or wants to lead, or suddenly wants to help, or suddenly offers a brother or a sibling or another friend some help. So, anything that puts someone back in their power. Anything that feels empowering, and where they take on the lead and a step forward to show who they are."*

Katia is equating agency with power and describes how TeamUp encourages youth to use their power as a tool to express themselves. In my experience as a TeamUp facilitator, I saw that participants would be eager to hold leadership roles in games, whether it be through explaining the rules of the game to other participants, or actively leading the facilitation of a game. The entire demeanor of a child would change when they had the opportunity to exercise their leadership. These reactions match with Kohli's (2011) theory that when displaced youth are in charge of their spaces, they are more likely to find well-being and success in those spaces.

While the NGOs working with young children focus on agency by encouraging ownership and leadership in program spaces, the NGOs working with teenagers and older youth spoke more about how their role was to empower youth to take charge of their lives, and find opportunities that can improve their well-being and prospects for success in the Netherlands. Ruth from Mexaena spoke about the importance of boosting the self-confidence of displaced youth, and that her dream workshop for participants would be an empowerment training so that they can learn how to present themselves to potential employers.

Nick from Nidos also spoke about empowerment. He addressed the ways in which he has observed displaced youth face challenges to their empowerment. He said:

> "Y*oung people, even at a very young age…they have aspirations. It's easy to push someone to feel empowered by doing what you have planned for them. You give them an empty slate, and then you say this is the trajectory I have set for you. This is the work plan, follow it, go through it, and this is your level. This also suffocates people."*

He is talking about how mentors and care givers often talk about empowering youth, but when they set goals for the youth, they take away opportunities for youth to exercise their leadership and agency. Nick addressed this further when he told the following story:

> "*One of the successful boys I work with confided in me that when he came [to the Netherlands], he told his teacher he wanted to be a pilot. But the teacher told him it would be too difficult because of the language. And the boy really took it to heart…So, we had to talk about this for some time, and then we came to a consensus, why should he believe the teacher?...Instead of*

building on empowerment, the teacher completely smashed the dream. So, caregivers and NGOs need to empower people..."

This story again suggests that displaced youth should be able to set their own goals. The organization's role should be to help them learn the skills to achieve those goals.

It sound simple to suggest that all that needs to be done to best support the well-being and belonging of displaced youth is to ask them what they want and what they need, and to provide them with spaces to embrace their leadership and feel empowered to work towards their vision of success. Many of my interviewees spoke about the ways in which they involve participants in official evaluations of programming to achieve this. For example, TeamUp is working to develop an evaluation focus group of displaced youth in AZCs so that improvements can be made with direct input from the youth. Even though this specific evaluation has yet to be conducted, the fact that TeamUp finds it important to include displaced youth voices in their evaluation plan is a great step toward Progressive Participation of Children (Matthews & Limb, 1999).

My research suggests that NGOs providing programming to younger children are taking steps to encourage agency by helping youth develop leadership skills and feelings of ownership over activity spaces. NGOs working with older youth are trying to help displaced youth develop feelings of empowerment so that they take ownership over their circumstances and take action in support of successful futures. In both cases, when these NGOs encourage agency in displaced youth, they are creating spaces for participants to provide feedback that can lead to positive developments and changes so that NGO programs better support the needs that displaced youth express. Afterall, according to Carlton (2015), displaced youth are more likely to feel a sense of belonging when they are active contributors. When NGOs provide opportunities for participants to contribute to their spaces, participants more easily develop belonging within those spaces, which, based on the positions this research takes in the debates on negotiating belonging, can lead to the successful development of belonging in the Netherlands.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This thesis sought to understand how non-governmental organizations in the Netherlands can best support displaced youth developing belonging within their host country. Three sub-questions were considered in order to determine this. The first was concerned with what NGOs are already doing to facilitate the development of belonging for displaced youth. The second sought to understand the negotiations that NGOs perceive displaced youth considering when trying to develop belonging. The third looked at why it is important for NGOs to encourage agency within their program spaces.

This thesis considered six different support programs offered by NGOs, looking at the different missions, goals, themes, and methods that each one uses to support displaced youth seeking a new home in the Netherlands. What I found was that each of these NGOs addresses belonging with displaced youth through a multitude of contexts, and with a multitude of considerations and negotiations. They directly and indirectly address eight groups of indicators that influence the negotiations of belonging that displaced youth face. These indicators are safety, home, place attachments, family, language, social relationships and building community, racism, discrimination, and segregation, and political status. Not all NGOs work with all indicators. While all NGOs work to create a safe space within their programming, some support the development of belonging by encouraging family participation in programs, some by encouraging the development of social relationships among peers, and some by addressing issues of racism, discrimination, and segregation.

Negotiating belonging is not only influenced by numerous indicators, but negotiations must consider these indicators in multiple spaces. Displaced youth need to negotiate belonging within the AZC, at school, and in the greater Dutch communities. Because of this, I believe it is important that displaced youth have access to a variety of programs that work with them in different ways, and in difference spaces. As Paul from TeamUp said:

> *"The child is the center of the circle and then we have all the elements surrounding the child, and it all plays a role in the belonging for that child. So the family is one side, children with each other is another side, child-teacher is another side, child-COA is another side, and all the spheres are looking at what is the context of the child, and it all needs to be approached one way or another to create safe space for them. And that would be helping also the other sides, to create a sense of belonging with the child and with each other."*

Paul is perfectly describing the importance of NGO diversity, where some NGOs are active in the home environment (TeamUp and Vrolijkheid), some in the school environment (Pharos and TeamUp at School), and some in a community environment (ElanArt and Mexaena). He describes a complex circle with multiple contexts and input coming from many different outlets. If displaced youth can be supported in one context, that context should be able to influence support from another context. Adjacently, developing belonging in one context should lead to the development of belonging within another context.

Reviewing how NGOs perceive the negotiations that displaced youth face in each of the eight indicators led to my positions in three prominent debates concerning the negotiations of belonging for displaced youth, and what it means for displaced youth to develop belonging within the Netherlands. In the debate on belonging being concerned with community versus place, it has been concluded that it is easier for displaced youth to first establish belonging within a community, and then they can establish belonging within the Netherlands. In the debate on whether belonging is achieved or granted, it is often more important that belonging is first granted by the government of the host country, and then it can more easily be achieved within a community inside that host country. This order can prevent further cultural bereavement if an individual is displaced again. Lastly, the third debate concluded that building both bonding and bridging social capital will lead to optimal well-being and belonging for displaced youth within a host country. Bonding social capital is more easily built, but once bonded, it is easier to build bridging social capital as well. The positions in each of these three debates are very paradoxical. As Katia from TeamUp said:

> *"I think sense of belonging is not linear. It's also a process, and it's a process that happens over time, and over years. It goes up and down. And you cannot look at it in an isolated way. And the process is also very interesting. A child who's been in the country for three months is very different from a child who's been here 6 months, one year, two years, whether they have status, whether they have a house, whether they study. And also, the journey behind that. There are so many variables, so I see it really as a circular process, in the same way healing and restorative process are."*

This quote sums up how my research has shown that developing belonging is a complicated and multifaceted process. Not only do the complexities within the host country affect the non-linear process of developing belonging, but complexities from the home country, the journey, and all the past

circumstances affect how an individual develops their belonging. This explains further why one NGO should not expect to influence an individual's development of belonging alone, and certainly not in any fixed amount of time.

This thesis' final sub-question sought to understand the importance of NGOs encouraging agency among their participants, as I believe the leadership and empowerment aspects of agency can support the development of belonging in a multitude of contexts, regardless of processual complexities. All NGOs I worked with do encourage agency for displaced youth, though again, in different ways. Regardless of the diversity in approaches around the best ways to support displaced youth while they develop belonging, I believe, in line with my interviewees, that developing belonging in the Netherlands would be simpler if, in addition to NGO support programs, researchers and policy makers would also ask displaced youth what their needs are, and empower them to take action and achieve the goals that they set for themselves. All this considered, I believe developing belonging in a host country comes down to something Kohli (2011) suggested: when youth are given the agency to have some charge over their own circumstances, they shed the label of refugee, and that is when they belong.

7.1 Recommendations

The societal relevance of this thesis was to be able to provide recommendations for how NGOs can improve the support they provide to displaced youth. Throughout my data analysis it became clear that several of the NGOs I interacted with were already thinking about recommendations for themselves and for NGOs like them. Most prominently, several interviewees spoke about the further involvement of parents in support programming being offered to displaced youth. Parents should be able to join periodic TeamUp sessions to have the opportunity to play with their children, and to work through some of the themes that their children work through. If TeamUp can help children overcome the prejudices that they face, they should also try to help parents overcome the same. Of course, a balance must be maintained in continuing to provide a safe space for children to be children, and parents should only be occasional visitors.

Another point made by interviewees was that NGOs should focus more on interactions with Dutch locals. Particularly TeamUp and Vrolijkheid programs, and others like them, should foster opportunities for youth living in the AZC to participate in sessions along with native Dutch peers. Presently, only the NGOs working with teenagers and young adults facilitate these experiences. I believe

younger children should be given the same opportunities for building bridging social capital earlier on, alongside their bonding social capital, as this could lead to earlier success with developing belong.

Learning about asylum seeker and refugee situations should be standard practice in regular Dutch classrooms. If native Dutch peers are knowledgeable, understanding, and prepared when displaced youth join their classrooms, they may be more prepared to encourage the belonging of displaced peers among them. Of course, it is important to find a delicate balance so as not to subjectify or 'other' displaced youth.

Additionally, it would be a benefit if all program facilitators working with displaced youth were educated about the political situations causing groups of people to become displaced in the first place. If facilitators have more information about the experiences participants might have faced both in their home country and along their route to the Netherlands, they may be more equipped to mediate for participants, and struggles they face within sessions will not go unnoticed.

NGOs should be mindful of the diversity of their facilitators working with displaced youth. As much as possible, facilitators should represent diversity in gender and language. Diversity in ethnicity, race, religion, and sexual orientation are bonuses that will expose displaced youth to welcoming sentiments from as many identity groups as possible, which can help them discover the different groups in which they can belong.

Diversity in types of programs offered is also essential. The more opportunities displaced youth have to connect, the more likely they are to find a method that works for them. What I see missing in the Netherlands are organizations that provide opportunities for displaced youth to volunteer within their community. My understanding is that it is not common in general for children and teenagers in the Netherlands to do volunteer work. However, I believe that if we can facilitate opportunities for displaced youth and native Dutch youth to participate in volunteer work where both groups are contributing to their community together, this will help with language acquisition, strengthen friendship bonds, foster empathy between groups, and through all this, help displaced youth develop belonging within their community.

Not every single NGO needs to solve all the problems of displaced youth. Opportunities for NGOs to communicate with each other will help them share knowledge and resources, fill programming gaps, and share best practices. Working together will help them collectively achieve the main goal of providing the highest quality of support to displaced youth arriving in the Netherlands. As long as they continue to encourage the development of leadership skills and empower youth to participate in the feedback loop for support program improvements, displaced youth will be well taken care of.

References

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of refugee studies*, *21*(2), 166-191.

Allsopp, J., & Chase, E. (2019). Best interests, durable solutions and belonging: Policy discourses shaping he futures of unaccompanied migrant and refugee minors coming of age in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *45*(2), 293-311.

Amin, A. (2002). Ethnicity and the multicultural city: living with diversity. *Environment and planning A*, *34*(6), 959-980.

Bakewell, O. (2011). Conceptualising displacement and migration: Processes, conditions, and categories. *The migration-displacement nexus: Patterns, processes, and policies*, *32*, 14.

Barker, C. (2003). *Cultural studies: Theory and practice*. Sage.

Binder, S., & Tošić, J. (2005). Refugees as a particular form of transnational migrations and social transformations: Socioanthropological and gender aspects. *Current Sociology*, *53*(4), 607-624.

Brun, C. (2001). Reterritorilizing the relationship between people and place in refugee studies. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, *83*(1), 15-25.

Carlton, S. (2015). Connecting, belonging: volunteering, wellbeing and leadership among refugee youth. *International journal of disaster risk reduction*, *13*, 342-349.

Chase, E., Otto, L., Belloni, M., Lems, A., & Wernesjö, U. (2019). Methodological innovations, reflections and dilemmas: the hidden sides of research with migrant young people classified as unaccompanied minors. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1-17.

Chatty, D. (2009). Palestinian refugee youth: Agency and aspiration. *Refugee survey quarterly*, *28*(2-3), 318-338.

Derluyn, I., & Broekaert, E. (2008). Unaccompanied refugee children and adolescents: The glaring contrast between a legal and a psychological perspective. *International journal of law and psychiatry*, *31*(4), 319-330.

Doppen, F. H. (2010). Citizenship education and the Dutch national identity debate. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, *5*(2), 131–143.

Elliott, S., & Yusuf, I. (2014). 'Yes, we can; but together': social capital and refugee resettlement. *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, *9*(2), 101-110.

Gustafson, P. (2001). Roots and routes: Exploring the relationship between place attachment and mobility. *Environment and behavior*, *33*(5), 667-686.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). Ethnography: Practices and principles. *New York: Routledge.*

Hammond, L. (2004). *This place will become home: refugee repatriation to Ethiopia*. Cornell University Press.

Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods*. SAGE Publications Limited.

Hobfoll, S. E., Watson, P., Bell, C. C., Bryant, R. A., Brymer, M. J., Friedman, M. J., ... & Maguen, S. (2007). Five essential elements of immediate and mid–term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, *70*(4), 283-315.

Hopkins, P. E. (2013). *Young people, place and identity*. Routledge.

Hopkins, P., & Hill, M. (2010). The needs and strengths of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people in Scotland. *Child & Family Social Work*, *15*(4), 399-408.

https://vrolijkheid.nl/en/about-us/mission/

Kenny, S., Mansouri, F., & Spratt, P. (2005). Arabic communities and well being: supports and barriers to social connectedness. *Geelong, The Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights, Deakin University*.

Kibreab, G. (1999). Revisiting the debate on people, place, identity and displacement. *J. Refugee Stud.*, *12*, 384.

Kohli, R. K. (2011). Working to ensure safety, belonging and success for unaccompanied Asylum-seeking children. *Child Abuse Review*, *20*(5), 311-323.

Korac, M. (2003). Integration and how we facilitate it: A comparative study of the settlement experiences of refugees in Italy and the Netherlands. *Sociology*, *37*(1), 51-68.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: an introduction to qualitive research interviewing*. Sage.

Lems, A. (2016). Placing displacement: Place-making in a world of movement. *Ethnos*, *81*(2), 315-337.

Lems, A., Oester, K., & Strasser, S. (2019). Children of the crisis: ethnographic perspectives on unaccompanied refugee youth in and en route to Europe.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1995). Typological Systems-Analyzing social settings. *Belmont: Wadsworth*.

Malkki, L. H. (2012). *Purity and exile: Violence, memory, and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania*. University of Chicago Press.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological review*, *50*(4), 370.

Mason, J. (2002). Qualitative researching 2nd edition Sage.

Matthews, H., & Limb, M. (1999). Defining an agenda for the geography of children: review and prospect. *Progress in Human Geography*, 23(1), 61–90.

Miller, J., & Glassner, B. (1997). The 'inside'and the 'outside': Finding realities in interviews. *Qualitative research*, 99-112.

Nannestad, P., Lind Haase Svendsen, G., & Tinggaard Svendsen, G. (2008). Bridge over troubled water? Migration and social capital. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *34*(4), 607-631.

O'Neill, M., & Spybey, T. (2003). Global refugees, exile, displacement and belonging.

Pemberton, S., & Phillimore, J. (2018). Migrant place-making in super-diverse neighbourhoods: Moving beyond ethno-national approaches. *Urban Studies*, *55*(4), 733-750.

Pharos. (2020, March 30). Gezondheid vluchtelingen, asielzoekers en statushouders. https://www.pharos.nl/thema/gezondheid-vluchtelingen-asielzoekers-en-statushouders/

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and schuster.

Rijksoverheid. (n.d.). Aanpak vluchtelingenproblematiek. Retrieved from https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/aanpak-vluchtelingenproblematiek

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. sage.

Ritchie, J., Spencer, L., Bryman, A., & Burgess, R. G. (1994). Analysing qualitative data.

Rowles, G. (1983). Place and personal identity in old age: Observations from Appalachia. *Journal of Environmental Psychology,* 3(4), 299-313.

Sampson, R., & Gifford, S. M. (2010). Place-making, settlement and well-being: The therapeutic landscapes of recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds. *Health & place*, *16*(1), 116-131.

Schinkel, W. & Van Houdt, F. (2010), The double helix of cultural assimilationism and neo-liberalism: citizenship in contemporary governmentality. The British Journal of Sociology, 61: 696-715.

Sirriyeh, A. (2010). Home journeys: Im/mobilities in young refugee and asylum-seeking women's negotiations of home. *Childhood*, *17*(2), 213-227.

Spaaij, R. (2015). Refugee youth, belonging and community sport. *Leisure Studies*, *34*(3), 303-318.

Turner, J. C. (1982). Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group. *Social identity and intergroup relations*, 15-40.

Turton, D. (1996). Migrants and refugees: a Mursi case study. *In Search of cool ground: war, flight and homecoming in Northeast Africa, James Currey Press: London*, 96-110.

UNHCR. (1989, November 20). Convention on the Rights of the Child. Retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

UNHCR. (n.d.). Figures at a Glance. Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html

Vigh, H., & Bjarnesen, J. (2016). Introduction: the dialectics of displacement and emplacement. *Conflict and Society*, *2*(1), 9-15.

War Child. (2018, November 29). TeamUp voor gevluchte kinderen in Nederland. Retrieved from https://www.warchild.nl/projecten/teamup-gevluchte-kinderen-nederland/

Wernesjö, U. (2012). Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children: Whose perspective?. *Childhood*, *19*(4), 495-507.

Wernesjö, U. (2014). *Conditional belonging: Listening to unaccompanied young refugees' voices* (Doctoral dissertation, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis).

Wernesjö, U. (2015). Landing in a rural village: home and belonging from the perspectives of unaccompanied young refugees. *Identities*, *22*(4), 451-467.

Wilding, R. (2012). Mediating culture in transnational spaces: An example of young people from refugee backgrounds. *Continuum*, *26*(3), 501-511.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *The politics of belonging: Intersectional contestations*. Sage.