Crossing Borders, Sharing Stories
A Case Study Using Applied Theatre for the Empowerment and Integration of Young Refugees

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Abstract

As forced migration continues to challenge Europe, young refugees and asylum seekers struggle to integrate into their host societies. This study examines young migrants’ empowerment journey through the applied theatre process. It investigates whether an improved sense of empowerment could assist in refugees’ personal agency in their resettlement efforts.

This study involved nine male refugees between the ages of 17 and 20 in an 11-week theatre class that resulted in an original performance of their migration experiences to a local population in Stockholm, Sweden. Using the Action Research method, it derived its pedagogy from Theatre of the Oppressed and employed Empowerment Theory to examine the results. This study found that applied theatre could significantly elevate young migrants’ feelings of empowerment. However, those feelings were fleeting if their life circumstances, particularly surrounding their refugee status, were unstable. The project compared the results with previous literature on applied theatre with marginalized groups to contribute to theories on the usefulness of this pedagogy with refugees. Sustainability of the participants’ feelings and the project were discussed as crucial ethical considerations for doing work with young refugees. Finally, this paper recommends the use of applied theatre as a viable non-formal educational supplement to address the global refugee crisis.

Key Terms: Young refugees, young asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, applied theatre, action research, empowerment, integration, Theatre of the Oppressed, non-formal education
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List of Abbreviations and Swedish Terms

AR – Action Research
AT – Applied Theatre
EC – European Commission
EE – Empowering Education
EFS – Ensamkommandes Förbund Stockholm (The Association for Unaccompanied Minors Stockholm)
ET – Empowerment Theory
EP – European Parliament
EU – European Union
FT – Forum Theatre
PAR – Participatory Action Research
PO – Pedagogy of the Oppressed
RQs – Research Questions
TO – Theatre of the Oppressed
TR – Teacher-researcher
UK – United Kingdom
UN – United Nations
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UM – Unaccompanied Minors
YR – Young Refugees
YAS – Young Asylum Seekers

Migrationsverket – Migration board
Kommun – Municipality

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1 Introduction

To Leave Behind

It is not easy to leave behind
Your birthplace, your kin your kind.
Even harder is the craving of your scent,
Which is still present in my mind.
Your image still before my eyes,
Your smell still under my nose,
Your shadow still in my mind.
Under your cold winter I was born,
And under your burning sun I was raised.
Both during your winter and summer I have played and danced,
And under your fall and spring, fallen and reborn.
Now I will be leaving you behind.
Now I will go against all odds to shape my destiny.
Be fate with me or against me.

- Darun Ismahil (participant)

The experience of forced migrants’ displacement and journey to a safer place often goes unexpressed. For some, revisiting the hardship is too traumatic. For others, it is an important part of the healing process. For those willing to share, it can also be a way for them to integrate with the host society, inciting empathy and understanding from native-born citizens.

Healing and integration are crucial for young migrants to move forward with their lives, but they need to feel empowered to do so. They need access to opportunities outside of formal schools to develop their sense of agency, resilience, and empowerment, and to form supportive communities. This case study uses applied theatre, a participatory, arts-based educational method, to examine empowerment and integration readiness among young refugees and asylum seekers. The results are compared with previous case studies to examine the theories and practices used for them to gain a sense of control over their lives and futures, and to create the societal change they wish to see. It also discusses the potential for applied theatre projects to assist in the integration of newcomers into host societies. This study is conducted with the hope that more local, community-based solutions will be developed in host countries to help the hundreds of thousands of young, forcibly displaced people each year.

This study may not come up with clean results. Peoples’ feelings, values, and experiences are not quantifiable. But that does not mean that social scientists should not study them. The bravest scholars pioneer the effort to examine and understand what others have previous stated is too unreliable to measure. This study is for scientists and educators that care to listen and empathize during their research process. It is for people who realize that the refugee problem needs to be thought about in different ways, and
new research should dare to experiment with creative solutions.

1.1 Background
1.1.1 The Refugee Crisis in Europe

Scenes depicted from Europe’s southern borders present an overwhelming flood of desperate people on the move. Migrants are arriving in droves to avoid conflict in Syria, Africa and the Middle East. Italy’s coast guard continues to rescue thousands of migrants from overcrowded boats off Libya’s coast while Greece’s refugee camps house tens of thousands. The European Union (EU) has promoted an official policy of providing refuge, but many of its member countries have resisted offering asylum to seekers (ECPHAO, 2016; Essomba, 2017). This may be because meeting migrants’ needs and rights such as food, housing, health care, and education puts ‘‘an enormous strain’’ on some EU countries’ resources (EC, 2017). Government agencies across Europe are crumpling under a backlog of applications, leaving asylum seekers feeling neglected. The Dublin Regulation holds the EU member state where asylum seekers first arrive responsible for their application (UNHCR, 2018a). But the EU’s asylum system wasn’t built to withstand the numbers it has been facing since the onset of the Syrian war in 2011. Many argue that the Dublin Regulation is both inherently unfair and logistically specious since the majority of applications fall on the southern border countries. The EU has also drawn a clear distinction between forced migrants and economic migrants, the latter being those whose lives are not endangered but are in search of better jobs or education. In this case, the EU obliges national governments to ensure that these migrants return to their home countries or another country through which they have passed (EC, 2017).

Between 2015 and 2017, Europe experienced the largest influx (more than one million) of refugees and migrants since World War II, making it an unprecedented humanitarian and political crisis (Lu, 2018). This is just a portion of the 65 million people displaced worldwide as a result of violent conflict and natural disasters (ECPHAO, 2016). While the numbers have dropped in 2018, largely due to Italy’s training of the Libyan coast guard and use of powerful militias to intercept and return migrants—something UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, calls ‘‘inhuman’’—(‘‘Migrant crisis,’’ 2016) the refugee crisis is ongoing. Another speculated reason for this drop is fighting among smuggler groups (‘‘Migrant crisis,’’ 2016).

Few that survive the journey know where they are headed or how long it will take to get there. The nearly 90% of migrants that pay thousands of US dollars to smugglers (EC, 2017) are distributed randomly around Europe. If they are lucky, they survive. If even luckier, their money buys them taxi rides and train tickets beyond the borders of Lesbos, Italy or Turkey. But there exists a lack of durable solutions in receiving EU countries, not only with the processing of asylum applications but also with the smooth integration of refugees. The common priorities in addition to learning the host country’s language and laws are for adult refugees to enter the workforce and refugee children and
youth to enroll in school. This accelerates the process of financial independence, relieving the host governments from providing support\(^1\). Education and job training are also important for refugees’ social development, and to be recognized by the host population as contributing to rather than depleting the society’s resources. Therefore, dynamic and long-term strategies from the governmental, professional, and academic realms are urgently needed. This paper proposes that the burden for the successful integration of young migrants cannot fall entirely on schools and teachers. They need supplemental educational opportunities in non-formal forms.

1.1.2 Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Sweden

Because this case study took place in Stockholm, it is relevant to understand the political and social environment of the participants in the study. Yet the findings of this research are not intended to be context specific. Rather, they are designed to better understand the potential of applied theatre (AT) for young refugees (YR) and young asylum seekers\(^2\) (YAS) throughout Europe and the world.

The term ‘young’ includes migrants that are considered of youth age (15–24) by the United Nations (Evans, Dr. R., Lo Forte, C., & Fraser, Dr. E. M., 2013). Those below the age of 18 who arrived at Sweden’s border alone are considered unaccompanied minors (UM) and are sometimes prioritized in Sweden’s system. However, a report published by Human Rights Watch indicates that Sweden is sorely unfulfilling its obligation to UM (“Seeking refuge,” 2016). Some UM wait five months or more without receiving a decision from Migrationsverket, Sweden’s migration board. Anger, depression, suicidal behavior, and other mental conditions are reported because of this waiting period (AFP, 2017; Lysna på mig!, 2017; Nordenstam & Lesser, 2016; Osterud, 2017). Late last year, Save the Children (Rädda Barnen) in Sweden published a report titled, Listen to me! (Lyssna på mig!) that surveyed 2,500 UM in Sweden. They listed the most critical issues troubling UM as (1) lack of understanding of the asylum process, (2) fear of asylum application rejection, (3) unsatisfactory housing and host families, (4) missing home and family (Arnö, 2017). “I came to Sweden with dreams,” one UM was quoted, “but Sweden gave me nightmares,” translated from: “Jag kom till Sverige med drömmar, men Sverige gav mig mardrömmar” (Arnö, 2017, p. 5).

Furthermore, the Swedish Local reported deportations of Afghan UM in October of last year because their applications were rejected, they committed crimes in Sweden, they turned 18 in the process of waiting for an answer, or because they couldn’t prove their age (Lammers, 2018). Amnesty International as well as international non-governmental agencies such as the Red Cross and Save the Children met this decision with strong criticism. In their 2017 report, Afghanistan: forced back to danger (2017),

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1 For example, asylum seekers in Sweden receive daily compensation that includes accommodation and food plus 24kr/day for single adults, 19kr/day for adults that share household expenses, and 12kr/day for children under 18 years of age; daily compensation is higher for those that do not receive food (Migrationsverket, 2018e).
2 Asylum seekers are migrants who have filed applications for asylum and are waiting to be granted residence permits, thus granting them refugee status.
Amnesty International stated that the deportation of minors to Afghanistan violates international law and should be stopped. Sweden’s Migrationsverket expects to hand over around 50,000 deportations to police in the coming years (‘‘Swedish police face tough task…’’, 2017). The idea of being sent back or needing to migrate to another country causes young refugees enormous anxiety. That coupled with being separated from their support networks can result in them causing harm to themselves. In February of 2017, Norwegian and UK newspapers reported three deaths out of seven suicide attempts made by UM in Sweden (AFP, 2017; Oesterud, 2017). That followed a period in 2014 where a reported 500 asylum seekers of all ages threatened or attempted suicide. Mikeal Ribbenvik, director of operations at Migrationsverket, conceded that 500 is likely an undercount since suicidal behavior is only recorded when it affects Migrationsverket staff’s working conditions (Nordenstam & Lesser, 2016).

In Sweden’s defense, they have raised their refugee quota to 5,000 in 2018 from 1,900 in 2016, making them the third largest recipient country in Europe (Migrationsverket, 2018a). Most slots will be given to refugees from the Middle East and East Africa, fleeing from the war in Syria. See Figure A below for the planned distribution.

A probable explanation for Sweden’s low quota in 2016 is due to the massive influx of asylum seekers that arrived in 2015 (approximately 160,000 with more than 35,000 UM) (Roden, 2017a). Before November 14, 2015, most applicants were granted residence permits. Since that date, AS arriving at Sweden’s borders have only been given temporary residence permits, and family reunification has been restricted. Figure B shows the number and flux of UM arriving in Sweden between 2004 and 2017 by month.
As of 1 March 2018, a reported 2,154 migrants have applied for asylum, 610 of which are UM. This puts 2018 on a similar trajectory as 2017 where a total of 25,666 asylum applications were received, 8,507 who were placed by unaccompanied minors.

Young refugees and YAS have the right to attend school in Sweden, and local kommun has the responsibility to provide education under the same conditions as other children and young people in the municipality; they should not have to wait until they learn Swedish to enroll (Migrationsverket, 2017). Sweden is therefore ahead of some EU member countries that have high rates of out-of-school YR and YAS. While a lack of space is not a problem, refugee children tend to be concentrated together. That means some are kept from studying in the same schools as native Swedish children. About 70% of refugee children attend schools where at least half of the pupils are immigrants (‘‘Learning the hard way,’’ 2016). This partial segregation results in them less likely to learn proper Swedish in addition to slowing their social integration process. Furthermore, families from immigrant backgrounds tend to find housing in poor areas with lower education standards. ‘‘Ghettoization’’ is already occurring in some neighborhoods in Stockholm, such as, where eight out of 10 residents have a foreign background (‘‘Rinkeby,’’ 2012). Rinkeby has gotten international media attention for being ‘‘unsafe.’’ Perhaps Sweden could learn from its neighbor, Denmark, where the proportion of pupils from migrant backgrounds in the city of Aarhus cannot exceed 20% in each school (‘‘Learning the hard way,’’ 2016). Europeans worried about their children studying beside migrants should take comfort in statistics that show that the most important predictor of pupils’ school results is their parents’ level of education (‘‘Learning the hard way,’’ 2016). Perhaps school integration might not be as negatively impactful as some
might fear.

1.1.3 Non-formal Education for Refugee Youth Resettlement and the Role of Empowerment

As visited in the previous section, the formal schooling environment for most YR and YAS in most EU countries is insufficient. It is not always possible to pursue the call for quality education from international humanitarian organizations through classical formal education. This could be due to a lack of teaching quality and insufficient capacity of local national education systems, which are coming under pressure from refugees and internationally displaced peoples (Di Donato, 2018). In some cases, it is not even accessible for them due to the language of instruction, transportation costs, legal status and protection concerns, or bullying (Bergamini et al., n.d.). Full recovery and integration is not possible without the opportunity for young migrants to learn alongside native children and youths in a safe environment, and gain access to resources that address their specific academic and social-emotional needs. Non-formal education could fill the gaps in the areas of language acquisition, social adaptation, and emotional outlets to name some. In other words, a balance needs to be struck between compulsory integration education and popular education that builds on voluntary participation and strengths-based approaches.

Non-formal education pedagogy and educational environments are more freely constructed since they do not require meeting many governmental standards. Non-formal educators often use a ‘popular approach’ that involves, for example, maintaining a cultural heritage and the creation of arenas for dialog. They do this in a democratic way that invites a co-production of knowledge. Popular education is thought to channel the needs and voices of the participants (Wiktorin, 2017). This gives educators the room to design non-traditional learning projects for students once the students’ needs are expressed. It also allows them to create an environment that builds confidence in the young migrants, encouraging them that they too have something to contribute to the educators, each other, and the wider society. Ideally, their improved knowledge and developed skills are byproducts of their engagement as contributors and leaders. Other examples of non-formal education for refugee youth include tablet-based mathematics, literacy and numeracy activities, youth groups, peer study groups and health education (Bergamini et al., n.d.; Triplehorn, 2001).

Empowerment as a necessary tool for refugees to move forward with their lives as explained by the UNHCR is presented later in section 2.1: Empowerment. The importance for empowerment specifically among young migrants, however, lies in the opportunities it creates for them to be ‘agents of change.’ The most effectual form of

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3 At times, the term ‘young migrants’ will be used to describe young refugees and young asylum seekers in one group

4 A strengths-based approach is one in which the design, implementation and assessment of experiential learning activities are aimed to uncover the talents, and then develop and apply strengths based on those talents, of students to achieve the highest degree of intellectual development and academic achievement (Lopez & Louis, 2009).
change, it could be argued, is when the movement comes from within the population most needing that change. A sense of empowerment enables young migrants to identify and find solutions to the problems afflicting them and their own communities, and to promote and protect their rights. Participating in empowering activities helps to defuse tensions by bringing youth together around shared goals, thus building more cohesive societies through citizenship development (Solano, 2017). It could also improve their employability and university admittance as they gain skills and take on leadership roles in community projects.

An example of empowering, non-formal education for YR includes Playback theatre. In their nine-week drama therapy program with immigrant and refugee adolescents, Rouseau et al. (2007) used playback theatre to prevent emotional and behavioral problems and to enhance school performance. They found that witnessing the reenactment of their traumatic or hopeful stories empowered the adolescents to transform adversity (directly, indirectly, or metaphorically), and provided them with the opportunity to construct meaning and grieve some of the losses associated with their migration and pre-migration experiences (Lammers, 2018). The acts of telling their stories for others to reenact, along with the discussion afterwards, presumably practiced their language skills. Co-creating a story where the adolescents looked for alternatives to their initial reactions or feelings provided opportunities for them to learn cooperative learning, community building, and self-reflection.

Many YR and YAS arrive in Europe with a poor quality education, an interrupted education, or no education at all. Non-formal education, created and adapted to young migrants’ individual needs, is essential to compensate the ways in which formal schools in host countries fall short. Taking a popular education approach and including an empowering component in the non-formal design could help young migrants identify their needs and equip them to find their own solutions that are viable, relevant and sustainable.

1.2 Aim, Objectives, and Research Questions

The general aim of this study is to explain and understand if and how applied theatre pedagogy can empower young refugees and asylum seekers, and how this affects their ability to integrate into the host society.

The following objectives and research questions will be separated into two categories to distinguish between the aim of the project and that of the research. This is in light of using action research, which will be described in section 4.3: Action Research in Education.

Executing the following objectives will help to carry out the aim related to the project.

1. Understand empowerment, its theoretical roots, and the indicators used to measure it;
2. Conduct a case study to evaluate the potential of applied theatre as a learning tool for empowerment and integration with young migrants

Executing the following objectives will help to carry out the aim related to the research.

3. Grasp the historical and theoretical context of the applied theatre field and how it has been used with marginalized groups;

4. Analyze and compare the findings to published applied theatre literature

**Research questions** provide explicit statements of what it is the researcher wants to know (Bryman, 2012, p. 14). Responses to these questions will be addressed in the themes, findings and discussion of this report.

The research questions related to the project are:

1. What impact does applied theatre pedagogy have on young refugees’ and asylum seekers’ embodiment of empowerment and sense of integration?

2. How can measuring the participants’ experiences in the applied theatre process assist in creating sustainable vehicles for empowerment and integration in young migrants?

The research questions related to the research are:

3. How do young refugees and asylum seekers express their feelings and needs as forced migrants before, during and after the applied theatre process?

4. What contribution could this project make to the literature on applied theatre pedagogy for the empowerment and integration of young migrants, and how could it be replicated internationally?

Though the objectives and research questions (RQs) are separated to better understand the role of the teacher and that of the researcher, there is substantial crossover of information presented in this report that will address the objectives and RQs on both sides concurrently.

1.3 Organization of Paper

The preceding sections introduced the reader to the refugee crisis happening in Europe and the situation faced by YR and YAS in Sweden. It also shed light on how non-formal education can help resettle YR in their host countries, and touched on the role of empowerment. The general aim, objectives, and research questions were then presented.

The following chapters and sections will further explore empowerment in the theoretical framework used in this study and the key concepts of applied theatre and
integration. However, it first describes this study’s significance to the field of international and comparative education, and the primary limitations (and their delimitations) faced in this research.

After chapter 3: Key Concepts, the methodology used in this study is explained in detail to provide transparency to the reader on how the findings were reached, and the validity of those findings. First, an explanation for using qualitative research and the case study method is provided. This leads to the reveal of the epistemology and ontology behind this study. Action research in education, the main method used in this study is then explored, followed by the study design, sampling, data collection, quality criteria, and ethical considerations. The methodology chapter ends by recounting the analytical procedure used.

The data analysis and findings are presented in tandem, and begin with a description of the background codes and descriptive codes uncovered using NVivo qualitative research software. The concepts are then described in detail, which lays the foundation for the formation of this study’s themes. Finally, this study’s findings are presented in three sections: empowerment, integration, and the sustainability of empowerment and integration.

The discussion then compares this study’s findings with findings from published literature on using applied theatre with marginalized groups, discovered during a previously conducted literature review. This paper ends with reflections on research and conclusions.

Nine appendices provide further detail for certain topics investigated in this paper.

1.4 Significance to International and Comparative Education

Noah & Eckstein (1998) define comparative education as an applied field that is an intersection of the social sciences, education, and cross-national study. Bray et al. (2007) modify this definition by claiming that comparative education need not focus on the comparison of nations but can include other units of comparison such as theoretical concepts, cultures, and values. This study uses pedagogy extant in formal and non-formal arts education to reveal the feelings the participants have of their migration experience from the Middle East to Northern Europe, and the change they want to see for themselves and their place in society. The researcher used a comparative lens throughout the data collection and analyzing process by considering processes of teachers and researchers used in Europe and other parts of the world that the previously completed literature review uncovered. The findings were then compared with the previous literature to identify best practices and neglected areas of study. Additionally, applied theatre is an applied field that intends to study the effect theatre can have on the participants, compare those effects, and understand the effect those participants can then have on their environment.
Furthermore, Noah & Eckstein (1998) assert that comparative research needs to ‘dig deeper under the surface of the aggregative, macro-institutional type of work’ (p. 54). This calls for more micro-scale studies where researchers get a closer look at the particulars of schools, classrooms, teachers, and methods (Noah & Eckstein, 1998, p. 54). This study offers a depth of understanding of the impact that theatre pedagogy in a non-formal educational setting can have on individual refugees and asylum seekers. Patricia Potts (2007) maintains that ‘insofar as social research requires communication and understanding between people of differing perspectives,’ then it is also comparative (p. 64).

The international component is intrinsic in the research since an American teacher conducted this study in Sweden with participants from Afghanistan and Kurdistan. Many cultural particulars, national policies, languages, values, and religions, to name a few, were interwoven in the work. Some are discussed in this study. Additionally, the theoretical framework involves perspectives from scholars in the U.S., Europe, Australia, and Latin America, all examining human nature and phenomena in empowerment and education worldwide, across time.

1.5 Limitations and Delimitations

This study contained limitations of various kinds due to the sizeable amount of data collected and its unconventional use of action research. The limitations in conducting the AT class and performance will be considered as they were experienced by the teacher. Also, the limitations faced by the researcher pertaining to objectivity and the limited amount of published AT literature that meets social science research standards will be addressed. Some delimitations will be offered as the limitations are examined.

This teacher-researcher (TR) devised an original project because of the specific field of study, the type of participants being studied, and the location in Stockholm, Sweden. No discovery of other AT projects being done with young refugees or asylum seekers at the time was made. Even if one had been found, the TR’s inability to speak Swedish would have likely prevented her from observing and studying the process.

While not entirely delimiting, the advantages to doing a TR-initiated project were generous. The main advantage was the frequent access to the participants’ insights into their experiences. The teacher and the participants built a trusting relationship, which allowed her to deeply and thoroughly observe the impact of the work on the sample.

Balancing the role of the teacher with that of the researcher was the most notable challenge faced. Objectivity is of upmost importance as a researcher, while investing in the students’ well being and outcomes are crucial to teaching. The TR therefore had to decipher when it was right to teach and when it was necessary to observe, analyze, and compare. Regarding objectivity to the data analysis, Nvivo was used to organize and systematize the TR’s observation of the concepts and themes that emerged. This allowed her to better see holes in the project planning and inconsistencies among the participants’ observations and reflections.
Power relations are crucial to consider when the researcher is also the teacher. The aim of this study was to empower the participants, but a teacher’s position of power is often assumed. Particularly considering the Middle Eastern backgrounds of the students, sharing power with the teacher was not something they were accustomed to. This made being the ‘’objective researcher’’ messy and touched on some ethical considerations related to conducting a democratic process (further discussed in section 4.8: Ethical Considerations). Some of the power issue was addressed by the commitment to reflexivity that was embedded within this research. An awareness of the political, social, and cultural position of the researcher in relation to her students was maintained. Moreover, the TR used an ‘empowerment approach,’ which Carrasco et al. (2016) explains as one in which the ‘’facilitator becomes a collaborator rather than an expert: he or she works with instead of advocating for the participants’’ (pp. 240-241).

Another limitation was the lack of a shared fluent language between the TR and the participants. The TR was from the United States while the participants hailed from Afghanistan and Kurdistan. This was delimited in part by having a strong English speaker from both Afghanistan and Kurdistan that were willing and able to translate for other participants with weaker English. Additionally, the TR had substantial previous experience teaching theatre to non-native English speakers, so she could remain mindful about her pace and word choice, and use of non-verbal forms of communication. Lastly, the TR had taught English to half of the sample previously, so she had knowledge of their English levels before the start of the project and could plan her lessons accordingly.

Time was a limitation. A total of 30 hours was originally designated to the class. However, once the group decided to perform an original play, an additional 20 hours was added. This left the TR with limited time to start writing the report. Also, the final interviews could not be conducted until six weeks before the thesis due date, leaving limited time to analyze the entire data corpus. However, initial coding of the first round of interviews as well as an ongoing cross-comparison of participation notes, teacher reflections, and student reflections was executed during the project and before the second interview round. The use of Nvivo helped speed up the later stages of coding since the TR learned to use the software when coding the first round of interviews.
The following theoretical framework is presented in two phases. It develops the concept of empowerment based on Empowerment Theory, born out of Paolo Freire’s Empowering Education. It then discusses Paolo Freire and his colleague, Augusto Boal, and their theories for liberating the oppressed.

2.1 Empowerment

Research conducted by the UNHCR shows that empowerment is a key ingredient in the recovery of forcibly displaced people, and assists them in shaping their desired self image and hopes for their future (UNHCR, 2001). Empowerment is defined as ‘‘a process through which women and men in disadvantaged positions increase their awareness to knowledge, resources, and decision-making power, and raise their awareness of participation in their communities, in order to reach a level of control over their environment’’ (UNHCR, 2001, p. 3). Whereas disempowerment is described as processes, programs, policy development or actions that ignore the priorities, needs, and interests of people, reducing their decision-making power and presenting obstacles to their economic, social, and political improvement (UNHCR, 2001, p. 3). The UNHCR’s practical guide to empowerment identifies four dimensions of (women’s) empowerment: (1) access to resources, (2) conscientization (self-awareness with respect to their rights), (3) mobilization (discussing common problems and forming organizations and networks), and (4) control (UNHCR, 2001, pp. 5-6). Control is explained as having influence over the events that shape their lives and that of their environment, and feeling empowered to participate in decision-making (UNHCR, 2001, p. 7).

The empowerment concept in this study is explored using Empowerment Theory (ET), taken from community psychology with its origins in Paolo Freire’s writings on the oppressiveness of educational methods and institutions of the time. Additionally, concepts from the fields of psychology, sociology, education and social action play key roles in advancing this study. Psychologically informed theories are used to understand what motivates young people while sociological ideas address the way in which society accepts or rejects them. Educational and social action theories are discussed further in the next sections, Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Theatre of the Oppressed.

American community psychologist, Julian Rappaport, conceived of ET in 1977, and his colleague, Marc Zimmerman, further developed it in the 1980s and 90s. Since then, the term empowerment has become widely used in the social sciences as well as in social work, politics, and women’s studies, thus making it multidimensional (Carrasco et al., 2015; Hur, 2006). Yet, it does not have an established definition. Empowerment is considered a social process since it occurs in relationship to others (Hur, 2006; Page & Czuba, 1999). It stems from the concept of power, traditionally understood as an isolated entity and one that can influence and coerce others. Power is often viewed as zero-sum

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5 Zimmerman (1984) states that giving empowerment a single definition could make attempts to achieve it prescription-like or formulaic, which contradicts the intention of empowerment.
where there is a fixed amount and no one can gain power unless those that possess it relinquish it (Carrasco et al., 2015; Hur, 2006; Page & Czuba, 1999). Empowerment, on the other hand, is changing and shared. It is a form of shared power defined by Page & Cazumba (1999) as a “multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their lives” (p. 25). Some Latin American community psychologists argue that empowerment should be translated to fortalecimiento or ‘strengthening’ rather than its literal translations of empoderamiento (‘give power or enable’) or apoderamiento, which implies taking power from others to challenge existing hierarchies (Carrasco et al., 2015, p. 233). In the broadest sense, empowerment is the expansion of freedom of choice and action; it is context and population specific, and takes different forms for different people in different sociocultural and politics contexts (Carrasco et al., 2015).

This study focuses on two of the three levels of ET specified by Zimmerman (2000): individual and community (excluding organizational empowerment). The individual or ‘personal’ level attempts to observe the changes, if any, of the participants’ sense of themselves throughout and upon completing the project. The community or ‘collective’ level examines what occurred within the group, and what actions were set in motion that might result in liberation. One definition of personal empowerment is the way people think about themselves, as well as their capacities, skills, knowledge, and mastery (Hur, 2015; Staples, 1990) to overcome their intellectual and psychological obstacles and attain self-sufficiency and decision-making abilities (Becker et al., 2004). Collective empowerment could be understood as a process by which people join together to break their silence and solitude, help each other, learn together, and join in action to overcome obstacles and attain social change (Boehm & Staples, 2004; Fetterson, 2002; Hur, 2015; Staples, 1990). According to Page & Czuba (1999), an important implication of the definition of empowerment is that the individual and community are fundamentally connected. They indicate that individual change is a prerequisite for or ‘becomes a bridge to’ community connectedness and social change. This synthesis facilitates our understanding of the empowerment process.

In his literature review covering empowerment processes across disciplines, Hur (2015) identifies Freire as the founding father of empowerment in education. According to Freire, the marginalized can become empowered by learning about social inequality (i.e. conscientizing), inspiring each other to feel confident that they can overcome oppression, and finally obtaining liberation (Freire, 1973a; Hur, 2015). In community psychology, the process involves two steps, namely relationship building and community building (Hur, 2015). After reviewing empowerment across all chosen disciplines (political science, social welfare and social work, education, health studies, management, and community psychology), Hur (2015) amalgamated the empowerment process into five progressive stages: (1) oppression, (2) conscientizing, (3) mobilizing, (4) maximizing, and (5) creating a new order (see Figure C).
Figure C. The Individual and Collective Empowerment Process (Hur, 2015, p. 536)

Here it is visible how the components of individual and collective empowerment can work together to facilitate the process of achieving empowerment. It begins with the identification of a social disturbance that leads to those oppressed becoming aware of the existing inequalities and the potential to change the circumstances. They then mobilize by starting movements and inviting others (oppressed and non-oppressed) to join. At this point, empowerment sees individuals being assertive and taking more aggressive action (Hur, 2015, p. 529). At the fourth stage, sharing power with the populace maximizes empowerment. Maximization is identified by a greater number of people joining the cause, increasing the ‘shared power.’ Finally, social oppression is overcome and social justice is achieved.

It is not only vital to discuss the processes of empowerment, but also the outcomes. Outcomes are more often emphasized when evaluating the achievement of individual and community empowerment while processes help us to understand the reasons for that growth or lack thereof. Perkins & Zimmerman (1995) insist that drawing a distinction between processes and outcomes is critical to clearly defining empowerment theory. Empowering processes for individuals might involve their participation in projects or community organizations while empowering processes for communities might include collective action to access government and other community resources (e.g. media) (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p. 570). Whereas empowering outcomes for individuals might involve situation-specific perceived control and resource mobilization skills; empowering outcomes on the community level might incorporate evidence of pluralism⁶, and existence of organizational coalitions, and accessible community resources (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p. 570). Terms that appear repeatedly throughout the literature that indicate themes and, in some cases, outcomes of individual empowerment include competence, critical-awareness, self-determination, self-esteem, participation, motivation, locus of control, and mastery. Expressions associated with

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⁶ Pluralism is a society where individuals, groups and communities can function with multiple languages and cultural styles; where individuals and groups can tolerate different customs, religions, class and sexual lifestyles and no one way of life is preferred over another (Pantoja et al., 1979).
community or collective empowerment include collective belonging, community building, involvement in the community, and control over organizations in the community, to name some.

The challenge with applying ET to research is its lack of agreed-upon definition. This could appear either as a difficulty to identify empowerment when it arises or labeling something as empowerment when it is not. According to Rappaport and Zimmerman, identifying empowerment outcomes requires that the participants’ definition of it is understood at the onset of the study (Lammers, 2017). The concept of empowerment is constructed by the participants in each case; its meaning is contextual, and it is only achieved when that meaning is clearly manifested in the individuals’ feelings and behaviors and in the actions taken by the group. Once an understanding of empowerment within the population-specific context is decided, researchers must determine outcomes, or indicators, that help them to measure the results. A fresh set of indicators must be developed for each research project, and must involve the participants’ input (Zimmerman, 2000). Examples of processes and their outcomes that might be used in an empowerment project are presented in Table 1: Empowering processes and empowered outcomes across levels of analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of analysis</th>
<th>Process (‘’empowering’’)</th>
<th>Outcome (‘’empowered’’)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Learning decision-making</td>
<td>Sense of control</td>
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<td></td>
<td>skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing resources</td>
<td>Critical awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with others</td>
<td>Participatory behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in activities</td>
<td>Analytical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Access to resources</td>
<td>Organizational coalitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open government</td>
<td>Pluralistic leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structure</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance for diversity</td>
<td>Residents’ participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Empowering Processes and Empowered Outcomes Across Levels of Analysis (adapted from: Zimmerman, 2000, p. 47)*

Empowerment theory suggests that people need opportunities to become active decision-makers in their communities to mobilize for social change. It proposes that individual empowerment is necessary for collective empowerment and, to some extent, visa versa. For one rarely feels empowered when she is alone. Similarly, empowering processes can lead to empowered outcomes, which can ignite new processes. The distinction between individual and collective empowerment and their processes and outcomes need to be understood clearly by the researcher(s) before the data collection can begin. This understanding comes from the participants’ grasp of the empowerment concept, and unique indicators must be constructed around their understanding. These indicators then help evaluate the outcomes.

Earlier, Brazilian educator and revolutionary, Paolo Freire, was declared the
father of empowerment in education. The next section will discuss his theories of education for social change and ‘empowering education.’

2.2 Pedagogy of the Oppressed

*Education should have as one of its main tasks to invite people to believe in themselves. It should invite people to believe they have the knowledge.*

(Freire, 1973)

At the heart of his work, Freire asks the question, who does education serve and for what purpose? He criticizes institutions for educating in a way that preserves power structures and perpetuates class differences. He is particularly critical of the teacher-student relationship, inside and outside of schools, as one that is fundamentally ‘narrative.’ Meaning, the relationship involves a narrating Subject who inculcates the Object with ‘motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable’ narratives about reality (Freire, 1972, p. 21). Freire’s metaphor of *banking education* is widely used in literature on education reform and social change to condemn the top-down, fixed transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. He writes, ‘Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat’ (Freire, 1972, p. 21). Freire supposes that this approach to education causes youth to feel alienated, meek, and powerless. Rather than preparing young people to be conscientious, confident, active citizens of democracy, it projects onto them an absolute ignorance, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression (Freire, 1972).

Freire often denied that he had a theory or model (Mohajer & Earnest, 2009). He referred to his work as ‘a pedagogy that used the power generated from knowledge to bring about social or cultural action’ (Mohajer & Earnest, 2009, p. 426). The Freirean classroom invites students to reflect, to think critically about the ‘reality’ that exists around them and identify what they would like to change. Freirean methods in education empower students to see themselves as having equal humanity to those instructing them, and to value what they have to teach as much as what they are there to learn. This makes learning a dialog. Freire’s methods question learning content at large, unveiling the oppressive indoctrination woven into curricula, and encourage students to take charge of their learning process by pursuing what they desire to know. It also encourages learners to question existing knowledge as a means to forming habits as active citizens of democracy. It calls on both teachers and students to advance democracy and equality by empowering themselves for social change as they advance their literacy and knowledge (Leonard & McLaren, Eds., 1993, p. 24). So, how is empowering education executed? Freire’s Empowering Education is a problem-posing process rather than a problem solving one (Leonard & McLaren, Eds., 1993; Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988), bearing in mind that there are various solutions to a problem. It recognizes that time is needed to

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7 ‘Reality’ is in quotations because Freire believed that individuals and society were constructed concepts, making reality a subjective experience (Freire, 1973).
form workable solutions, and for individuals and their community to change.

Empowering education (EE), sometimes referred to as ‘liberating education,’ involves three steps that begin with listening. The facilitator must first listen to the students to understand the issues or themes in the community. To Freire, listening is a continual process that extends beyond initial needs assessment (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988, p. 383). This increases the probability that participants remain active in the process beyond the initial stage.

Next, EE engages the participants in a dialog about the described issues using a problem-posing method. This is where the teacher asks thought-provoking questions and encourages the students to formulate their own questions. This way, students learn to question answers not only answer questions (Leonard & McLaren, Eds., 1993). This presupposes equality among the participants and the teacher, and requires everyone to question what he or she knows. In doing so, they realize that through dialog, existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created (Freire Institute, 2018).

The method starts with coding, which Freire describes as a physical representation of the issue (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988, p. 383). This can include role-play, slides, photographs, stories or songs. Generating ‘’codes’’ has the potential to create discussion objects to structure problem-posing dialog about the issues. An effective code is one that is familiar to participants, is many-sided, and is open-ended without solutions (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988). It is the facilitator’s responsibility to promote group leadership by encouraging them to think critically about these codes. To do this, he or she can follow a five-step questioning strategy that moves discussion from the personal to the social analysis and forthcoming action level (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988, p. 383).

Participants are asked to:
1. describe what they see and feel
2. define the levels of the problem as a group
3. share similar experiences from their lives
4. question why this problem exists
5. develop action plans to address the problem

This questioning process serves as a mirror to the participants, reflecting their realities back to them.

The third stage of action emerges directly from the problem posing discussion. It involves testing out their analyses in the real world and reflecting on the results. This gives the reflections a deeper base gained from the input of their experiences. Experimenting with the possible solutions discussed in the dialog phase and then reflecting on the results that manifest helps the participants to find better solutions. Freire calls this an ‘action-reflection-action’ cycle (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988, p. 383).

As outlined above, EE’s emphasis is placed on praxis, which requires participation and dialog, horizontal relations between educator and students, a problem-
posing method, and the learner’s culture constituting the basis of their own learning (Mayo, 1993, p. 2). Freire proposed that social transformation could occur when investing in this theory and following this method.

Empowering Education was originally devised to be carried out in non-formal educational settings (Mayo, 1993). One can assume this was because formal institutions were not open to such a radical change in education pedagogy at the time. However, the Brazilian government supported him to start thousands of cultural circles around the country in 1962 after achieving success with the empowerment of illiterate peasants. This came to a sudden halt when he was forced into exile after a military coup in 1964 (Mohajer & Earnest, 2009, p. 426).

In conclusion, considerable literature has been published on the outcomes of Empowering Education. The participant-centered approach encourages youths to take responsibility for their participation and to think critically about how they can contribute to strategies for change. Empowering Education promotes active learning on the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive levels. It develops agency among the individual participants, and helps them develop strategies to achieve their goals (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988). Lastly, it fosters community building, providing them a safe space away from schools to join together and take action.

The next section will introduce Augusto Boal’s theory, Theatre of the Oppressed, which transfers Freire’s educational models into theatrical ones.

### 2.3 Theatre of the Oppressed

Most relevant to this study, Augusto Boal, theatre teacher, theorist, political activist and colleague of Paolo Freire, published *Theatre of the Oppressed* in Brazil in 1974. Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) is a methodology bolstered by an ethos of liberation, empowerment, and social change for the oppressed by the oppressed (Lammers, 2018). Theatre of the oppressed was inspired by the Greek comic poet, Aristophanes (c. 450 BCE-c. 388 BCE) who wrote, “the dramatist should not only offer pleasure but should, besides that, be a teacher of morality and a political adviser” (Boal, 1985, p. xiii). Boal believed that theatre could play a critical role in facilitating Freire’s vision of inspiring oppressed people to come together, examine society’s inequality, and design action for change.

Those who attend live theatre know what to expect. The entertainers memorize their lines and cues, and perform them for the spectators who sit quietly and hope to enjoy the performance. Boal called this “spectacle theatre,” one in which the spectator is voiceless and forced to digest what the players perform for them. This actor-spectator relationship directly mirrors that of the traditional teacher-student denounce d by Freire. Theatre of the oppressed challenges this archaic structure by suggesting that the audience violate the “bourgeois code of manners.” They do this by asking questions, making suggestions, and challenging what they see on stage (Boal, 1985, p. 142). Theatre of the
oppressed breaks down the theatre’s “fourth wall” and invites the audience to participate in the action on stage, making them “spect-actors.” In a theatre where there are actors and spect-actors, all are participants.

This revolutionary method allowed the theatre to take on a new usefulness by generating discussion and rehearsing action towards real social change (Prendergast & Saxton, 2016). Forum Theatre (FT) is the most common TO technique used to facilitate this dialog and experimentation phase of theatre creation. Forum Theatre experiments with acting out solutions to problems that exist in the lives of the participants. In their study on theatre as liberation for asylum seekers, Horghagen & Josephsson (2011) state that, “Participatory theatre techniques (…) give possibilities to observe people’s doings and enacted experiences and how they construct meaning during a situated approach to their cultural worlds” (p. 175). The key concept here is meaning making. Forum Theatre immerses the spect-actors in depicted scenarios of conflict or inequality, and encourages them to step into a role to explore solutions. It gives permission to participants to construct meaning, thereby assigning importance around their feelings of oppression and desire for change.

Providing an example of FT might help clarify the process. A young man works in a fish factory and his boss forces him and his fellow workers to work for twelve consecutive hours. The problem is thus how to combat the human exploitation. The man suggests filling the machine with so much fish that it breaks, giving the workers time to rest while the machine is fixed. The scene is performed with actors playing the workers, another playing the boss, another the foreman, and lastly, an actor portraying the ‘stool pigeon’ (for there is never good reason to withhold some humor). While they ‘work,’’ the characters discuss the problem, how they feel, and potential solutions until they agree to go with the plan to overload the machine. The workers rest while the machine is fixed, and then they go back to work. After the scene is finished, the actors and spect-actors discuss if this is a good and sustainable solution. The answer is ‘no’ so other solutions are proposed: someone could plant a bomb and explode the factory, they could stage a strike, or they could form a union. The scene was performed again testing the bomb solution. However, the spect-actor that suggested the solution and therefore played the worker with the bomb did not know how to make or plant a bomb, and realized they would all be out of work once the factory was destroyed. Thus, the solution was abandoned. They then agreed to act out forming a union. This was collectively judged as the best solution to the problem (Boal, 1985, pp. 139-141).

In FT, no idea is imposed. Any spect-actor can propose and carry out a potential solution through an improvised scene. This stage follows the discussion stage explained above, and is referred to by Boal as praxis. The notion of praxis lies in the process of action that emanates from ongoing discussion-reflection dialectic (Prendergast & Saxton, 2016). The intention of FT is to provide a space not only for discussion and reflection but also as a tryout for real action contributing to change (Prendergast & Saxton, 2016, p.

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8 The “fourth wall” in theatrical terms is the invisible wall between the actors and the audience that seals the imaginary world of the play. This “wall” is broken when the actors address the audience directly, which is not common in most stage plays.
Boal states plainly that it is not the place of the theatre to show the correct path. Rather, it can offer a platform by which all possible paths can be explored (Boal, 1985, p. 141). He states, “within its fictitious limits, the experience is a concrete one” (Boal, 1985, p. 141).

Boal continuously adapted his practice for different settings and purposes. In the 1970s, TO was used to address overt political oppressions in Brazil, and then for teaching literacy and Spanish as a second language in poor areas of Peru (Boal, 1985, p. 120). In the 1980s, after he was exiled to Argentina (and later self-exiled to Europe) for his work as a cultural and political activist, Boal adapted his pedagogy to address more internal psychological oppression seen in the developed world. When he returned to Brazil as an elected official in 1992, he became interested in using his methods to enroll citizens to create new laws through a democratic and dramatic process. Applied Theatre was born out of TO and now has several practices and applications of its own. Applied Theatre is explained in the next chapter, Key Concepts.

Finally, TO targets the second stage of Paolo Freire’s EE method: the dialog stage. It uses the participants to create physical images and enact social inequalities through improvisation and others forms of theatrical expression such as pantomime (wordless depiction of events) and role-play. These exercises spark a dialog among the participants by helping them to see their personal situations related to societal establishments. Engaging in theatre as a hypothetical version of reality also helps participants experiment with action-based solutions. Boal’s intention was to create a theatre technique that empowers participants to act out in the real world what they’ve rehearsed in the safe rehearsal space. It is designed to plant a “sort of uneasy sense of incompleteness that seeks fulfillment through real action” (Boal, 1985, p. 142).
3 Key Concepts

While the previous section laid an abstract foundation, the following two key concepts were chosen to give the reader context regarding the education method used in this process, and to discuss a social need for doing this study. The Theoretical Framework supported the interpretivist epistemology while the Key Concepts pertain to the empirical evidence. Because of this, applied theatre and integration are discussed practically, focusing on their history and best methods for implementation, to provide context for this study’s results.

3.1 Applied Theatre

Applied Theatre (AT) is a pedagogical and aesthetic technique used to explore issues relevant to marginalized groups within a socio-political context, and usually takes place outside of mainstream theatres (Lammers, 2018). It is considered a democratic form of theatre practice that provides a safe space for vulnerable participants to share narratives, fictional or factual, that illuminate their lived experiences whether or not they have done theatre before. Applied theatre is a method that focuses on multiple perspectives, explores feelings, examines issues of local importance, experiments with outcomes, and involves the audience as active participants in the creation of understanding and action.

Applied Theatre gained recognition as an academic discipline in the 1980s and 90s in response to the harsh funding climate and post-cold-war impact of postmodernism. It was born out of a desire to take ‘theatre to the people,’ but its idealism was tempered with a pragmatic search for financial support in non-arts sectors (Thompson, 2003). After the turn of the century, AT became firmly established in the higher education sector with the term applying to university courses, centers for research in the UK and Australia, and modules in universities from North America to Sri Lanka (Thompson, 2003, p. 13). The term ‘applied’ allows AT to share a commonality with other applied disciplines in that it is a discipline that is taken out of the university building and activated in the real world. It joins other applied fields to transform the abstract into something practiced or worked; it transfers theory into action. ‘Applied theatre’ and ‘applied drama’ are terms used interchangeably, but Prendergast & Saxton (2016) distinguish applied drama as focusing solely on the process without culminating in a performance. Theatre stems from the Greek word, theatron, which indicates the seating area in ancient Greek theatres. Applied theatre, according to some, requires a public or semi-public performance to meet the expectations drawn from the term (Prendergast & Saxton, 2016). This research will therefore use the term, ‘applied theatre.’

Applied theatre is an umbrella term for a participatory arts technique that targets community reflection and social change, and incites audience involvement to help create that change through dialog and action. It happens all over the world as part of a grassroots arts-based movement, and stems from the most social of art forms (Prendergrast & Saxton, 2016). While cultural contexts are different, AT is a technique that when documented and published, can be replicated in various international settings (Lammers,
It provides alternative ways of exploring feelings, personal challenges, or social-political crises using storytelling, role-playing, or physical (e.g. dance) or musical expression, as examples. Nonetheless, AT has no exact definition or set standards for practice. It is a malleable term that can be used to describe any theatre project used to assist the participants in achieving personal transformation or social justice/change. It might therefore be more informative to discuss what AT is for and for whom rather than what it is.

In AT, the emphasis is on the participants and how they might benefit from the process. Participants range from oppressed women to students to racially or ethnically discriminated peoples to those from low socio-economic backgrounds, or patients suffering from trauma or poor health. Applied theatre projects commonly take place in schools, therapeutic environments, prisons, refugee camps, third world countries, and non-formal educational settings (e.g. community centers). Practitioners act as change agents to empower participants to ‘lay new tracks,’ helping them to abandon institutionalized beliefs that keep them feeling fixed in their societal positions. In other words, practitioners oftentimes act with intention to disrupt dominant social narratives where drama becomes the place to explore ethical gaps (Nicholson, 2005, pp. 63-64).

One of the ethical gaps commonly explored in AT are traditional power dynamics. Investigating these dynamics attempts to empower the participants by challenging the status quo. This ability stems from the theatre’s history of challenging traditional power structures and providing a safe platform in the guise of fiction for playwrights and actors to express their frustrations with each other and their audiences. The servant figure in historical drama, for example, often had more power in the world of the play than his or her master. Sometimes that knowledge (or false knowledge) was enough to destroy the powerful lead figures such as with Othello and his jealous standard-bearer, Iago, who drove Othello to murder his loyal wife; or Balthasar, Romeo’s servant who falsely informed Romeo that Juliet had died, causing Romeo to commit suicide.

In summary, AT projects most often take place in indoor and outdoor spaces not usually defined as theatres, with participants who may or may not be skilled or experienced but want to explore a personal or social issue, and to audiences who have a vested interested in the subject matter or are members of the community at which the performance is directed (Lammers, 2018). Applied theatre methods challenge dominant social and political narratives about power or societal roles. It can create pathways for change for those who feel oppressed, marginalized, or want to grow, heal, or explore new possibilities for themselves and their people.

3.2 Integration

This study focuses on the educational aspects of AT and their potential to empower the participants, and the additional possibilities it has to prepare YR and YAS for integration into society. Also, this work hopes to propose solutions to host societies of good integration practices, or at the very least, help them to identify areas for improvement.
While the integration of refugees can be discussed on larger levels such as law and policy, this section will focus on integration related to community programs and national opinion with some mention of policies. This researcher believes that the big, global refugee crisis is best treated with small, local solutions.

Difficulties for forced migrants do not end when they arrive in a safe place. They must heal and adapt to the culture where they land, which is non-linear (Marshall et al., 2016) and can be described as ‘‘slow and complex process of social integration’’ (Essomba, 2017, p. 207). On the ground level, this process requires participation from both the migrants and the nationals, supported by programs from governments, private organizations, or multilateral agencies. However, Europe has encountered challenges in this regard.

Already in 1995, Miles and Thränhardt cautioned that European sentiments towards migrants were becoming increasingly resistant.

Right-wing political forces in most west European states have seized on the issue to promote xenophobic nationalism and to stir up social unrest, and established political formations (especially Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) are unable to formulate a coherent liberal response to the emerging crisis. Asylum-seekers and migrants find themselves trapped in the whirlpool of an inclusion/exclusion dialectic. (p. 15)

The above text dating back 23 years foreshadowed what could be happening now as the migrant crisis is becoming larger. The Social Democrats have the majority in the Swedish party system today, but recent polls show that the Swedish Democrats, the ‘‘anti-immigration party,’’ has become the second most popular since the 2015 immigration crisis (up nearly 13% since the 2014 election) (Roden, 2017b). One proposed reason for this could be the Social Democrats’ unwillingness to address immigration more forcefully (Schmidtke, 2016), resulting in voters wanting a change in leadership. This places immigrants in Sweden in a precarious position.

Since 2014, the process of accepting refugees in EU countries has become inefficient or ineffective possibly because of the sudden arrival of a multitude of refugees as well as an inconsistent integration system. Essomba (2017) claims that Member States use national sovereignty arguments to interpret EU policy on refugees to align more with the national interests than a common European model (p. 207). For example, Ireland and the UK choose, on a case-by-case basis, whether to apply EU rules on visa and asylum policies while Denmark does not adopt (opt-out) EU-wide rules that relate to immigration (Essomba, 2017, p. 207). He further states that while Nordic countries are relatively experienced in managing migration flows⁹, public opinion tends to disapprove of accepting these new residents (Essomba, 2017, p. 209).

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⁹ In 2013, Sweden accepted more refugees per capita than any other member country in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Arnett, G., 2014). Additionally, Migrationsverket (2018d) has been accepting refugees since the 1980s.
Successful integration is not only important for refugees’ recovery and well being, but also for the host society’s ability to accept them as citizens. A study conducted jointly by the European Social Survey and the Migration Policy Group, published by the European Parliament (EP) last year, show that native citizens are more willing to accept new arrivals if they offer skills that can contribute to a country’s workforce or if they have higher levels of education. Figure D shows the percentage of the population in 21 of 28 EU member countries that believe it is very important that immigrants have work skills needed in the country (blue bars); the orange bars show the percentage of the population that believe it is very important that immigrants have good educational qualifications. Perhaps having these qualities indicates to native-born citizens that they are “‘legitimate’” refugees as opposed to economic migrants. Around 25% of the polled population favors migrants with work skills in Sweden. Around the same percentage prefer migrants with education qualifications. This can be interpreted in two ways. Either they accept migrants regardless of their relevant skills or education, or 75% of the population polled don’t approve of migrants at all.

Studies show that countries with more inclusive policies of integration have a lower rate of immigration intolerance. For example, if Sweden were to focus more on integrating its newcomers into the labor market, it could improve its economic growth (Roden, 2017) and view immigrants as a benefit to the society. Economic growth occurs when the population of working age people is high; when the proportion of children and retirees increases, growth declines. A study done at Stockholm University showed that with net immigration rising to 50,000 per year since 2000, Sweden’s age structure has changed. The bulk of immigrants are between the ages of 15 and thirty-nine. With Sweden’s declining birth rate, a trend that emerged in the 1990s, immigration could make up for this lack of working-age population (Malmberg, et al., 2016, p. ix). In its conclusion, the study states that there is no reason to see increased spending on immigration as a long-term threat to Sweden’s economy. Instead, increased spending could give civil society organizations and public institutions the opportunity to recognize and develop refugees’ skills and capacities.

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10 Migrant Integration Policy Index; European Values Study; Eurobarometer; International Civic and Citizenship Education Study; International Social Survey Programme (European Parliament, 2017)
Migrants without relevant skills or education have a higher hill to climb. They must find their way into the work force, likely in manual labor or low-paying jobs, and this begins with learning the host country’s language. In 2015, FutureLab Europe released a study investigating practices in four EU member states (Finland, Spain, Germany, and Romania) through the European Integration Fund. It included 125 questionnaires completed by migrants who took part in EIF funded programs. Migrants stressed that language is the most important factor for integration and called for higher involvement of local NGOs and host societies (Bačinskienė & Garbauskaitė-Jakimovska, 2016, p. 10).

Language acquisition is also crucial for school-aged refugees. Their starting point for language learning and social integration is inarguably enrollment in school. Schools can provide a safe place for young migrants, particularly unaccompanied minors, to reconcile their own culture with that of the host community (Woods, 2009). They do this by fostering reconciliation and resilience following upheaval, and supporting refugee youth and their families through linguistic support, among other things (Marshall et al., 2016). However, Essomba (2017) argues that refugee children’s and youngster’s rights to education are being threatened and even violated in Europe. This could be due to factors including demographic, psychological, economic, legal, and sociological that impede the process of getting young refugees in schools and learning in a way that allow them to excel (Essomba, 2017). For instance, refugee children in compulsory education need schooling with a strong emotional component, which many schools and teachers in host countries are not equipped to support. Also, since many families leave their home
countries suddenly due to violence or war, they do not bring with them identity documents, which are required to legally enroll in school.

There is therefore a need for host societies to mind the welfare of refugee students when designing their schooling strategies for integration. This begins with diversifying schools, and not isolating refugee youth to learn separately. The “humanist approach” to schooling could attend to the needs of a culturally diverse student population by instituting reciprocal learning (Woods, 2009). This would mean balancing the provision of basic literacy and language of refugee students with an opportunity for students not in refugee status to learn about the culture, history and experiences of the marginalized groups. Arts activities are one way to do this since they involve elements that transcend a need for common culture and language such as music, painting, drawing, dance or theatre (Marshall et al., 2016). For refugee youth, the transformative potential of using arts-based activities lie in their accessibility, their expressive potential, their ability to circumvent the language and cultural barriers they experience in their host societies, and the opportunity for them to share their culture, traditions, or hardships (Marshall et al., 2016). This could incite acknowledgement, empathy, and respect from members of the host society, particularly their peers not in refugee status.

Paolo Freire too has something to say about integration. He writes that, “Integration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to the reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality” (Freire, 1973, p. 4, italics in original). Freire implies that authentic integration requires new members to feel empowered to transform the reality they have become a part of. This stems from his observation that the ‘normal’ role of human beings is not a passive one since man is not bound by biology. Instead, man is conscious and creative, and can intervene in reality to change it (Freire, 1973, p. 4). But is this change welcomed? When the demographics of a population shift suddenly to include people of different ethnicities, religions, and cultural backgrounds, initial resistance is expected and, to some extent, understandable. However, according to Freire, the host society has no choice but to redefine its ethnic, religious, and cultural identity to be more diverse and inclusive. The alternative is a society involving prejudice and conflict.

Migrants face many challenges for integration into European societies. Ways for them to overcome these challenges include learning the country’s language, customs, and societal expectations, enrolling in school, and continuing their education or entering the work force, the last two being highly valued by societies in the European Union. Meanwhile, ways that host countries can help nationals to accept refugees and promote access to opportunities for them include implementing integration policies that promote tolerance, prioritizing language acquisition for refugee youth in a diverse school setting, supporting arts-based or other educational and community-building opportunities for migrants and nationals to exchange knowledge and experiences, and by valuing migrants’ contribution to the work force. Integration requires the host society to be willing to redefine its identity to include a more diverse population. Successful integration of refugees requires the involvement of everyone in a society, and like other forms of social change, it takes time.
4 Methodology

Perhaps uniquely, this is more than a thesis project. Due to the researcher’s desire to help create educational opportunities for all youth to succeed, this project extended beyond the research realm and drew attention to an issue of local importance. Yet, while this was a community service project with YR and YAS, the process of design, data collection, and data analysis meets the standards of master’s level social science research. This qualitative case study used action research to collect, observe, analyze and present the data in a systematic way. Action research was the only viable research methodology because it allowed the TR to facilitate the project and study it, and it supported the research’s purpose to create change through action and reflection.

One of the greatest difficulties encountered while designing this project was finding peer-reviewed case studies using AT specifically for refugee empowerment and integration. While there exists many published case studies in the field of applied theater, some with young refugees, few of them take the rigorous approach required in social science. Therefore, to design this research project a careful study of the action research method was combined with the TR’s creativity and skills honed in teaching theatre in education. The study design and methodology used is presented in this chapter to provide context and transparency.

4.1 Qualitative Research and the Case Study Method

According to Bryman (2012), qualitative research ‘‘embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation’’ (p. 36). This means that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between people rather than existing phenomena that apply to every group. The qualitative research approach was selected since its flexibility of design and interactivity were appropriate for capturing the young participants’ opinions of the process and feelings about themselves and their place in society. Furthermore, qualitative research provides the framework to analyze the impact of this unique approach to investigating empowerment among YR and young asylum seekers.

Proponents of quantitative methods frequently criticize qualitative research. Quantitative research is a deductive analytical process that involves a linear movement from theory to conclusions whereas the qualitative approach, which uses inductive reasoning, begins in a more open-ended way and gradually narrows down the research questions or problems (Bryman, 2012). However, using the qualitative approach in this study allowed the project design to accommodate and adapt to the participants’ struggles, talents, visions, and goals, which permitted unexpected themes to emerge. Action research, the type of qualitative research used in this study will be described in section 4.3: Action Research in Education.

Case study design is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Stake, 1995 in Bryman, 2012, p. 66). Conducting a case study was most
appropriate for this research because it allowed for an intensive analysis of the effect that a specific educational pedagogy could have on a marginalized group with a common experience in a single location. The findings therefore are rich in context, allowing the researcher to make observations of a deeper kind. Due to their intensive nature, Bryman (2012) describes the unique ability case studies have to enhance the researcher’s sensitivity to what lies behind the observed patterns within a specific context (p. 74). This design was fitting since the desired outcomes are specific and subjective: examining empowerment among the participants and how to cultivate it, as well as providing insights for integration practices for refugee youth. Case studies are more persuasive in this regard than ethnographies, policy reviews or theoretical comparisons, for example, because they provide real cases of impacts made on people when testing a specific pedagogy for identifiable and repeatable results.

4.2 Epistemology and Ontology

Due to the exploratory and qualitative nature of this study, it is constructivist in its ontology and interpretive in its epistemology. Constructionism asserts that ‘social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors’ (Bryman, 2012, p. 710). This is the antithesis to objectivism, which posits that social phenomena are fixed and exist independently from the actors. This study suggests that truth is individual and contextual, and it attempts to understand and articulate the participants’ personal truths within this process, or context. It then offers solutions or ‘actions’ that help to develop and perpetuate the actors’ truths. The context is specific to the group of participants, their experiences, and the activities done in the process.

This study uses an interpretive epistemology. What does it mean to be a YR with a growing sense of empowerment? Why is it important for YR to feel integrated in society, and how does one measure this? How can the applied theatre process influence these concepts? To answer these questions, which are derivatives of the RQs, this study presents a specific version of a social reality rather than a definitive one. Therefore, the findings of this study will be contextual to the participants within this case study, requiring interpretation. Interpretivism stands in opposition to positivism because it tries more to understand things than to explain them. Because of the limited research published about AT’s role in refugee empowerment and integration, this study hopes to contribute to the understanding of these concepts and functions with the intention to contribute to theory that might help develop the use of AT in this way. This study is hence inductive.

It is also worth noting that due to the social-emotional subject matter and qualitative research design, this study is admittedly axiological. It is value bound, and it would be being dishonest to claim to remain entirely objective. The TR invested emotionally in the journey of the participants, and was more concerned to study relevance than rigor. The TR will therefore be making her own values and potential biases known throughout this report, as well as the value-laden nature of the information gathered.

Lastly, one particular epistemological consideration worth noting about this study
is the desire to understand and explain the AT process itself, not only what comes out of it. In many ways, this study is different from other social science research studies. It observes values, feelings, and artistic and educative processes that some social scientists may caution against. However, perhaps it is time that the social sciences and the field of international and comparative education pay closer attention to the social-emotional needs, values, and feelings of young people, and dig deeper in understanding the ontological implications. During these troubling times of forced mass migration, educators are obligated to find solutions for providing equitable education to all youth, which could result in more harmonized societies. So far, language immersion and cross-cultural discussions have not been enough. Educational practices must be re-examined, re-evaluated, experimented with, and updated. To do this is not an easy task and cannot simply take a set of variables, do something to those variables, and then assess their change. The ‘‘doing something’’ needs to be put under a microscope so that we begin to understand when and how certain things shift. Understanding these series of shifts could offer new ways of thinking about how to educate young people during these troubling and unfamiliar times.

4.3 Action Research in Education

Action research, being essentially qualitative or naturalistic, seeks to construct holistic understandings of the dynamic and complex social world of the classroom and school. It reveals people’s subjective experience and the ways they meaningfully construct and interpret events, activities, behaviors, responses, and problems. (Stringer, 2008, p. 47)

Action research (AR) in education is primarily used by teachers and administrators as systematic processes of inquiry into the planning, evaluation, problem solving and so on, of schooling (Stringer, 2008). It is a participatory, collaborative process of inquiry that engages the participants in all stages of the process. This fits with the participatory nature of theatre in education, the form of applied theatre used in this study. Theatre in education’s history dates back to the 1960s in England where actors went into schools and gained an understanding of effective teaching. The resulting performances had intellectual and emotional impacts on the student audience, which taught them that they could be active participants in their own learning by acting as potential agents of change (Prendergast & Saxton, 2016, p. 82). More than being active audience members, action research can get students staging their own plays and studying the meanings they make as well as the impact it has on them and their communities.

Action research in education is often scrutinized for its lack of objectivism since the researcher is also the teacher (or facilitator), potentially coloring his or her observations. The legitimacy of using action research in social science is an ongoing discussion. Some defend it as exploratory while others denounce it as untrustworthy.

The strength of AR lies in its systematic execution of carefully articulated processes of inquiry. As researchers implement a study, they focus on a specific issue and then Look (gather information by careful observation including looking, listening, and
documenting), **Think** (analyze the information to identify significant features), and **Act** (use newly formulated information to devise solutions). The AR routine is often depicted as a helix (Figure E).

![Figure E: Action Research Helix (Stringer, 2008, p. 4)](image)

However, more complex problems that intend to take action outside the classroom, like social change initiatives, require a more sophisticated formulation of this process. The AR cycle involves gathering data, analyzing the data, communicating outcomes, and taking action. For projects with longer timelines or that lead to new projects, the action feeds back into the study design, completing the cycle (Figure F).

![Figure F: Action Research Cycle (Stringer, 2008, p. 5)](image)

The distinguishing feature of AR from basic research is the result in an ‘‘action’’ phase of inquiry (Stringer, 2008). In this study, the AR helix describes the ongoing process of the participants while the AR cycle depicts the course of the research (the researcher’s cycle).

Another distinctive feature that AR provides researchers with is the inclusion of what this TR will refer to as the *middle section* of research projects. This means that AR researchers not only measure the ‘before’ and ‘after’ of values, norms, perspectives, etc. of the participants that were impacted or changed by their participation in the study, but it also captures what transpires during the work period. This provides rich insight into the world the data was born from as well as offering more data to analyze. Doing this can
contribute to a deeper epistemological understanding of how educative processes help young people to invest in their own learning and gain richer knowledge because of it. This idea was introduced in section 4.2: Epistemology and Ontology. The data related to the middle section of this study was collected through participant observations, student reflection journals, and the teacher reflection journal.

Participatory action research (PAR), used in this study, is a kind of action research where the researcher and the participants are processing issues and carrying out the research together. The primary purpose of PAR is to stimulate social change through a systematic collection and analysis of data for the purpose of taking action (MacDonald, 2012). The PAR method was chosen for this qualitative case study due to its democratic and participatory approach, giving voice and agency to the participants. Like in TIE, the TR works collaboratively with the participants to find solutions by pooling knowledge that deconstruct problems they encounter. Philosophically, PAR embodies ‘’the concept that people have the right to determine their own development and recognizes the need for local people to participate meaningfully in the process of analyzing their own solutions, over which they have (or share, as some would argue) power and control, in order to lead to sustainable development’’ (Atwood, 1997, p. 2 in MacDonald, 2012, p. 36). The roots of PAR can be traced to Paolo Freire who believed that critical consciousness and reflection was essential for personal and social change (MacDonald, 2012). However, the development of this critical consciousness requires that individuals be knowledgeable about social, economic, and political contradictions in order to challenge the oppressive elements of reality and free themselves from oppression.

While AR is criticized by some academics for lacking in rigor and for being too partisan, some promote it for its commitment to involving the participants in the identification of their problems and creating their own solutions (Bryman, 2012, p. 397), thus empowering them to take action and initiate change. This reflects the popular student-centered approach to education. Advocates consider this a more effective method than having solutions to participants’ predefined problems imposed on them. Action research can thus be used to identify nuances to existing problems and find fresh solutions.

4.4 Study Design

The UNHCR suggests that programs with refugee youth should consider the following key points:

- There is no universal refugee experience;
- Agency is emphasized, in contrast to being passive recipients of services;
- Attention to gender is critical;
- Participation;
- A resiliency lens is more helpful than a vulnerability or deficit lens;
- A continued connection to cultural identity (rather than assimilation) is assumed;
Cultural competency is a key requirement for resettlement workers (Marshall et al., 2016, pp. 2-3)

This study’s design incorporated the points listed above to the best of the TR’s ability. She was not very informed of Middle Eastern culture before the start of the project, but gained much knowledge during it. It is far too common to treat YR and YAS as victims. Hence, a strengths-based approach was used during this project, which means that the design, teaching, and data collection were rooted in experiential learning approaches that identified and amplified participants’ talents and strengths.

Figure G below shows a mind map of the study design. (To see the original hand-drawn map, see Appendix 10.1: Hand-drawn Study Design Map.) The design of this study considered the knowledge gained from a literature review on AT for empowerment of refugee youth and other marginalized groups conducted prior to this study and submitted to Stockholm University as part of the International and Comparative Education Master’s Program (Lammers, 2018). Throughout the design and implementation, reflections on how AT pedagogy could relate to empowerment approaches with refugees, and visa versa, were considered. Aims, objectives, and research questions were then formed, an epistemology and ontology were established, and the planning of lessons together with participant recruitment commenced. Each lesson plan was created prior to the coming week’s class so that the TR could gather input from the participants on their desired direction for the course. The first class began with a discussion about empowerment, resilience, and integration. This was followed with a discussion about what the participants hoped to gain from the course and if they wanted to stage a final production. While this discussion was not a formal focus group, much useful information emerged that affected the study’s design. A self-esteem questionnaire was given at the second meeting since an increase of self-esteem was identified as a desired outcome by several of the participants. Within the first three weeks of the class’s commencement, the first round of semi-structured interviews was conducted (see Appendix 10.4: Interview Guide 1). The class met for 55 hours over the course of 11 weeks, including the final performances. In total, the TR devoted between 75 and 80 hours to planning, teaching and making logistical arrangements for the final performances.

The interview questions were formed based on the TR’s intuitive sense of what might help to answer this study’s RQs as well as insight gained from previous studies. The interview process attempted to be an empowering activity in itself, initiating a dialog that gave participants agency over what was discussed. Several unexpected pieces of information surfaced from the initial interview that directly impacted the rest of the project.

The TR’s intake of information then proceeded on two tracks (project and research) that were inspired by the research questions. Observations about the participants relating to empowerment and integration, and the field of AT and its usefulness for YR, were being constantly compared. Additionally, the TR compared the progression of the course with that of previous literature that suggested choices based on identified good practices.
Participant observations, a teacher reflection journal, and participant reflection journals were collected throughout the 11 weeks. Participants often reflected on what transpired during the classes as they learned about FT, improvisation, pantomime, juggling, rhythm, storytelling, playwriting, and writing and rehearsing a final production. The final production was performed twice, first for an audience of approximately 40 members and nine days later for an audience of about ninety. Immediately after the production, students completed the same self-esteem survey. The second round of interviews was conducted within four days of the final performance.

The AR helix shown in the previous section occurred during and after each class. A warm-up circle began each class that not only warmed their voices and bodies, but invited reflections about the previous class or anything else they wanted to raise that week. The last 15 minutes of each class was reserved for reflection about that day’s class and suggestions for moving forward. This not only helped the TR plan for the next class, but also gave students an opportunity to take ownership of what had occurred and what intention they wanted to set for the next meeting. It also helped them to visualize the final production and the results they wished to see come of it. The AR cycle continues as this TR prepares for the sustainability of this project, hopefully creating a continuing program.

![Figure G: Study Design (author’s creation)](image)

**4.5 Sampling**

Unlike many case studies where gathering participants is one of the most challenging
aspects, the construction of this study’s sample was straightforward. The TR had previously volunteered with *Ensamkommandes Förbund Stockholm*\(^ {11} \) (translation: Association for Unaccompanied Minors), and recruited participants through the organization to partake in the 10-week drama course. The purposive, non-probability method of sampling used, therefore, was convenience sampling with elements of snowball sampling. The TR invited students from the English class she had taught previously, and they invited others. No other method for assembling a sample was feasible due to the large commitment required from the participants. Consequently, the sample for this case study is not representative of all YR and YAS participating in an applied theatre project, nor does it claim to have achieved theoretical saturation. The information sought from the interviews and reflection journals, as well as the surveys, participant observations, and researcher’s reflections on the final performance were exclusive to the participants. Any evidence of empowerment gained can only offer examples of the transformative potential of the applied theatre process, and contribute to developing theory.

The TR required the participants to commit to attending regularly and engaging actively if they joined the drama (theatre) group. After some dropouts and new additions, nine boys between the ages of 17 and 20 from Afghanistan and Kurdistan completed the course. An extra effort was made by the TR and the participants to recruit girls, but with no success. The participants postulated that there were fewer female YR and YAS in Sweden, and those the participants and TR knew were too shy or too embarrassed about their English to join the drama class. Five of the nine participants volunteered to be interviewed at the start and end of the project, resulting in 10 semi-structured interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home country</th>
<th>Age claimed</th>
<th>Time in Sweden</th>
<th>Asylum status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.5 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9 mos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.5 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Kurdistan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.5 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.5 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Kurdistan</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure H. Participant Demographics (author’s creation)*

Due to the safety concerns of the contributors later mentioned in section 4.8: *Ethical Considerations*, privacy of the participants’ identities and transparency of the aims and actions of this study were central to this study’s design. Each participant was assigned a code number to conceal his identity, and will only be referred to as such in this report.

\(^ {11} \) *Ensamkommandes Förbund Stockholm* (EFS), established in 2013, is a politically and religiously independent organization that is run by unaccompanied minors to oversee their fair asylum application process and assist in the integration of young migrants into Swedish society (ensamkommandesforbund.se).
4.6 Data Collection

Participant observations, a teacher reflection journal, semi-structured interviews and self-esteem surveys conducted at the start and completion of the course, student reflection journals, a final manuscript, and a video of the final performance were collected in order to generate an intensive, detailed examination of this case. Notes were also taken during the interviews, which proved useful since three of the interview recordings were lost. However, two interviewees replaced the lost data with written responses to the interview questions, which were thematically coded and analyzed, using Nvivo, along with the interview transcripts.

Participant observations sometimes serve as the primary form of data collected in research studies, but they were used here to remind the researcher about the activities and people under study as well as to crosscheck data collected through the interviews. They helped remind the researcher of who said what and when, nonverbal expressions of feelings, how much time was spent on various activities, and how the participants communicated with each other and the teacher. The participant observations also helped in the development of the second interview guide.

The Rosenberg Self-esteem questionnaire (Appendix 10.6: Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire) was given to the participants at the start of the theatre course and again directly after the final performance. This helped the TR isolate self-esteem as a characteristic that is critical to the development of empowerment discussed in the literature (Mohajer & Earnest, 2009) and stated by the participants as something they’d like to acquire more of. The Rosenberg questionnaire was chosen because of its history and popularity in measuring self-worth in the field of psychology dating back to 1965. It is a 10-item, uni-dimensional scale used to measure positive and negative feelings about the self (Rosenberg, 1965). All items were answered using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The Rosenberg questionnaire was used as an attempt to objectively measure participants’ self-esteem since all other data collected was verbalized by the participants as descriptions of their experiences and feelings, or were observations made by the TR of the participants’ behaviors. Additionally, it is suggested in AR to include an element of quantitative data because it ‘‘provides useful information that improves participant understanding of the nature of events studied and enhances their ability to make decisions related to actions likely to lead to an effective outcome’’ (Stringer, 2008, p. 107). Complete objectivity in this questionnaire was not possible, however, since it was still the participants that were evaluating and numerating their own sense of self-esteem.

The teacher and student reflection journals were used to track happenings of each session and to gain feedback about each class. The TR wrote one to three pages each week about what had occurred, what she’d observed, which activities worked better, and ideas to modify plans for the next session. The student journals were not collected each week since some classes either ran out of time or it did not feel right by the teacher to break the flow and end the class with 15-minutes of journal writing. Student journals were written on seven out of the 10 classes with a final reflection collected via email after
the final performance. Of the nine participants, seven provided final reflections. Some examples of questions posed for the weekly student reflections were “what did you learn from class today?” and “how did you feel during today’s class?” The final reflection question posed was, “how do you feel about the whole process of the drama class and the final show? Did you learn anything or not? It is ok to include negative information or criticism.”

The final manuscript and video of the final performance were collected as evidence of the applied theatre process and final product. They also served as two different manifestations of the story created by the students to share their migration experiences. Comparing these manifestations in different forms (written and performed) provided the TR a unique way to observe the participants’ participation, growth, and creativity. They were also key ingredients for documenting the project, which is valued by EFS and the TR as she prepares for the sustainability of the project (discussed further in sections 4.7.1: Generalizability and Sustainability and chapter 7: Reflections on Research).

Lastly, the semi-structured interviews conducted at the beginning and end of the process were the most valuable sources of data collected. Semi-structured interviewing was chosen to allow the researcher to keep an open mind about the contours of the information offered, so that theories and concepts could emerge out of the data (Bryman, 2012, p. 12). (This also reflected the inductive approach.) At the students’ request, the interview questions were provided to them via email three or four days in advance. Because the interviewer and interviewees did not share a common native language and no interpreters were sought, only those comfortable with speaking English volunteered to be interviewed. This suited the researcher, as time would not permit more than 10 interviews. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim except for one participant who asked not to be recorded. In that case, detailed notes were taken during the interviews. The first interview included eight questions while the post-course interview contained twelve (see Appendix 10.4: Interview Guide 1 and Appendix 10.5: Interview Guide 2). In alignment with best interview practices in AR, the questions fell into two of the four ‘grand tour’ question categories: typical (“Tell me what you know about….”) and specific (“How would you rate your personal level of…?”). The benefit of developing the interview questions in this way was to provide the interviewees with the opportunity to explore issues in depth on their own terms in the case of typical questions, and reveal detailed descriptions of events, interactions, and feelings when answering the specific questions. The interviewer also incorporated extension questions (e.g. “Can you tell me more about that?”), encouragement (“I understand what you mean; keep going.”), and example questions (e.g. “Can you give me an example of what you mean?”) to guide the interviewees and help them to feel comfortable.

### 4.7 Quality Criteria

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is marked by dependability (reliability), credibility (validity), transferability (generalizability), and confirmability (objectivity) (Ponelis, 2015, p. 538). This section will discuss the first three while objectivity was
introduced in section 4.2: Epistemology and Ontology, and will be further explored in the next section 4.8: Ethical Considerations. Because of the social action and personally transformative goals unique to this research, sustainability will also be discussed. Lastly, the iterative triangulation method for increased trustworthiness will be introduced.

4.7.1 Transferability and Sustainability

This study was unique to the field of AT regarding the backgrounds of the participants combined with the language used (English) in relationship to the location (Sweden). True replication based on the generalization of these findings would be nearly impossible, as is with most qualitative case studies. Qualitative findings tend to be oriented to the contextual uniqueness of the social world being studied (Bryman, 2012).

Moreover, people who are examined in case studies do not represent all people of the same societal position. Instead, the findings are generalized to theory rather than to populations (Bryman, 2012, p. 406). Every attempt was made to provide a ‘‘thick description’’ of the context and the participants so that readers might assess the likely applicability of the research to their own projects. This could assist other researchers in drawing conclusions about what they think worked or did not work, and to further the discussion of understanding and strengthening refugee empowerment and integration readiness using applied theatre.

Sustainability is an important element to this research study. While most case studies are not revisited after completion of the research, the vulnerability of YR and YAS require an ethic of care regarding the instructor’s relationship with the participants and the continuation of the work. Applied theatre practitioners caution against ‘‘parachuting into’’ a group of already marginalized people where the creation of a safe space requires time to build relationships and trust (Vettraino et al., 2017, p. 89). This means that sufficient time needs to be devoted to the AT process, and the students require reassurance that their instructor will not disappear afterwards. Ideally, AT practitioners equip the participants and/or school teachers/organizational leaders with a handbook containing drama and other classroom exercises to reflect upon and extend the issues raised in the workshop (Day, 2010).

4.7.2 Dependability and Credibility

The validity of conclusions drawn from a qualitative research study depends on the clear understanding of the purpose of the research, and hence the form of outcome it is intended to create (Chapman et al., 2015, p. 201).

This being a participatory process, credibility (validity) was improved by the constant input and self-direction of the participants. The purpose of the research was made explicit to the participants at the start of the study, and there was immediate buy-in to understand the empowerment process through the artistic platform provided by theatre. The participants were, for the most part, eager to share their stories and work together toward
staging a final production. A desire to change the sometimes discriminating and xenophobic view of immigrants in Sweden was also revealed by the participants through group discussions and in the initial interviews. The participants’ desired outcomes for this study were therefore interwoven into the study design and data collection. For determining validity in AR, effective actions must emerge from the research, clearly demonstrating the success in identifying appropriate perspectives and meanings (Stringer, 2008).

Dependability (reliability) focuses on the stability of results across time, settings, and samples (Stringer, 2008, p. 47). To achieve this stability, the details of the research process, including processes for defining the research problem, collecting and analyzing data, and constructing reports, need to be made available to participants and other audiences (Stringer, 2008). Limitations in time and available auditors made the dependability of this study challenging. However, four attempts were made to increase the dependability. They were an ongoing sharing of the process and progress with the TR’s advisor, two classmates to review the analysis and findings before submission (confirmability), and the use of triangulation to verify identified outcomes. Additionally, the TR confirmed some conclusions she drew from the reflection journals and interviews with the participants that produced them (‘member checking’).

4.7.3 Triangulation

Iterative triangulation employs systematic comparisons between literature review, case evidence, and intuition (Lewis, 1998). Iterative triangulation helped this study achieve higher levels of credibility and dependability by increasing the diversity and quantity of literature reviewed, of cases found, and of identifying common emerging themes and concepts. Comparing and contrasting emerging constructs and theory across case settings enhances conceptual definitions and fortifies internal validity, improving testability of resulting theory (Lewis, 1998). This comparison between this study’s findings and findings reviewed in previous AT studies also served as the comparative element in this research.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

4.8.1 Anonymity, Confidentiality and Consent

At the start of the project, a participation consent form was presented and explained to the group, and discussed in-depth with those that did not understand. The consent form included a confidentiality agreement promising anonymity to the best of the researcher’s ability, freedom for withdrawal, and to opt out of participating in any activity or discussion (Appendix 10.2: Participant Consent Form). A different form for guardian’s consent was given to minors under 18 years of age (Appendix 10.3: Guardian Consent Form).

While anonymity in social science research is highly prioritized, Bryman (2012)
explains that absolute anonymity is difficult to achieve. Pseudonyms and codes can hide only so much as identifiable markers and subtle descriptions emerge, potentially revealing the identity of the participants. While this was not the intention of the researcher, maintaining anonymity was particularly challenging due to the advertisement of the final show by word of mouth and on Facebook. Also, the video of the final performance was posted on YouTube for the participants to view and share. To be sure that this didn’t violate a code of ethics or the trust established between the participants and the TR, verbal consent to post pictures and videos was elicited from the entire sample before hand. The reveal of some participants’ identities is particularly delicate due to their undecided asylum status or asylum rejection. While their identities were not revealed, the participants’ status of refugees or asylum seekers was not hidden. Unfortunately, the TR cannot control any potential discrimination or stigmatization imposed on the participants by disagreeable viewers of the show advertisement or video (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). However, the participants understood that before consenting to having their photos and videos published.

The university-issued photo and video cameras were deleted of all files before their return to the university. All photos, videos, and interview transcriptions were password protected on the researcher’s computer and will be destroyed along with the information stored in Nvivo upon notification of the issuance of the master’s degree.

4.8.2 Working with Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers

There are many ethical issues to consider when conducting empowerment projects with YR and YAS. Leonard & McLaren, Eds., (1993) describe the only ethical way to teach empowerment.

*The critical teacher must also be a democratic one. If the critical teacher criticizes inequality and the lack of democracy in society, and then teaches in an authoritarian way, she or he compromises her or his credibility. The empowering education Freire suggests is not a new data bank or doctrine delivered to students; it is, instead, a democratic and transformative relationship between students and teacher, students and learning, and students and society* (p. 26).

The TR was continually aware of treating the students equally, inviting them to share their opinions, ideas, and criticisms at all stages of the process. She also looked for opportunities for them to take on leadership roles including script editing and directing. She related to them with sensitivity and care, but also as competent young people that were responsible for the quality of the performance and making the most of this opportunity. She never asked them about their migration experiences without them introducing the topic. For example, when she assigned the story writing for the final manuscript, she did not require them to complete the assignment nor did she insist that it must be about their migration experience.

responsibilities instructors have when using the expressive arts as a teaching tool:

*It is necessary for instructors and leaders to be prepared to address the potential challenges and difficult topics that may emerge in expressive arts contexts. This means that they must understand the complex backgrounds and conditions of participants; encourage and foster a positive sense of community despite differences; understand and gain exposure, where possible, to the difficulties and hardships that participants may have faced; acknowledge, problematize and address inaccuracies and omissions of western knowledge and power imbalances; and, name the challenges that the youth are facing in their daily lives* (p. 37).

In the TR’s submitted literature review, she included substantial research on best practices for using creative and performing arts with refugee youth. She maintained an encouraging, open, and sympathetic dialog with the participants that acknowledged and problematized power relationships, inequalities, and discrimination. She also invited them to share their fears and doubts about the asylum and resettlement process, and mentored them as they expressed a desire to improve their English and further their education.

### 4.8.3 Ethical Practices in Action Research

Finally, ethical practices in AR involve the human dimensions of relationships, communication, participation, and inclusion (Stringer, 2008, p. 34). Good relationships in AR apply to teacher-student relationships and the relationships among the students. They promote feelings of harmony, avoid conflicts where possible, resolve conflicts as they arise, and encourage cooperative dynamics as opposed to competitive ones (Stringer, 2008, p. 34). Good communication involves listening to each other, accepting and acting upon what is said, being truthful and sincere, acting in socially and culturally appropriate ways, and regularly advising others about what is happening (Stringer, 2008, p. 35).

One of the purposes of AR is to engage the expertise of the participants and help them to appreciate the quality and validity of their experiences and therefore their voices. Active participation, hence, is very empowering for people who have a poor self-image (Stringer, 2008, p. 35). Participation is most effective when it enables people to perform significant tasks, provides support for people as they learn to act for themselves, and deals personally and directly with people (Stringer, 2008, p. 35).

Ultimately, inclusion is of utmost importance when conducting ethical action research. Inclusion requires the teacher and participants to involve all individuals whose lives are affected by the issue of investigation, consider all issues affecting the research questions, cooperate with groups or external agencies where necessary, and ensure all participants benefit from activities (Stringer, 2008, p. 36). All of these points were employed throughout the theatre class and final performance, and during the interviews.
4.9 Analytical Procedure

Bryman (2012) states that qualitative research is less codified than its quantitative counterpart (p. 407). This means that it is less influenced by strict guidelines and directions about how to go about collecting data and analyzing it. This more fluid structure gives fuel to critics of qualitative research, claiming that it is unsystematic or unscientific, and that it gives the researcher too much room to make unfounded correlations. This is the main reason that NVivo was used to code the interviews: to provide greater rigor and increase the reliability of the procedures used to analyze the data. This was particularly important for maintaining the objectivity of the teacher-researcher.

The data corpus for this study includes participant observations, self-esteem questionnaires, teacher and student reflection journals, the final manuscript, the performance video, and semi-structured interviews. The data are separated into sets; the main set includes the interviews and participant reflection journals, which was coded using NVivo. The other sets include participant observations, the final manuscript, and the teacher reflection journal, which were analyzed less formally but studied intensively in order to contribute context and insight to the themes and eventual theories that emerged from the coding process. The questionnaire compares the before and after scores of the students quantitatively, while the video of the final performance was examined carefully to find supporting themes related to the final manuscript and the written reflections.

Hand-written memos were kept to type codes into categories, helping in the formation of themes. Initial codes were divided into background codes and descriptive codes after refinement from a second round of coding. Recoding was done for the purpose of checking that coding was done correctly, and that the coded text was cross-coded with other applicable codes. The codes, referred to as ‘units of meaning’ in AR, were then grouped and consolidated into concepts, which were compared with insights from the other sources of data. Themes were then uncovered, reviewed, and named. A visualization of the data analysis process is shown in Figure I below.
Thematic analysis was used to code the main data set. Thematic analysis is a systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While AR does not require thematic analysis to be used, the TR chose to use it in an attempt to ensure that the themes were generated in a systematic way. It organizes and describes the data set in detail, and when used thoroughly, interprets various aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since this study was conducted under constructionist ontology, thematic analysis was used to examine the ways in which events, realities, meanings, and experiences are the effects of varying discourses taking place within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

However, thematic analysis lacks a clear ‘what it is’ and ‘how to execute it’, causing some critics to consider it a ‘free for all.’ Other critics regard it as ‘impression analysis’ because of the lack of detail and scrutiny on how the analysis process is carried out (Welsh, 2002, para. 7). Yet, the use of analysis software helps provide support for the way in which the data are being interpreted, and is thought by some to add rigor to qualitative research (Welsh, 2002, para. 8).

The thematic analysis was conducted in six stages:
1. Familiarizing self with data
2. Generating initial codes and concepts
3. Discovering and reviewing themes
4. Defining and naming themes
5. Complementing the analysis with information from other data sets
6. Writing the analysis

The participant observations, teacher reflection journal, questionnaires, final manuscript, and performance video were re-examined to add perspective to the concepts, and support the themes that emerged from the main data set. In other words, the additional data were used in triangulation to confirm or refute what the main data set found. Finally, the findings were written and a comparison with previous literature was conducted to contribute to theory of how AT can empower young refugees and help prepare them for integration.
5 Data Analysis and Findings

This section will take the reader through the story of this study and how it arrived at its findings. It will serve as an analytic thread that unites and integrates the major themes of the project.

In examining her data, the TR began with a word frequency query to give her an overarching idea of potential themes that might emerge. NVivo can generate a word cloud that sizes the words in proportion to their frequency (see Appendix 10.8: Word Cloud). The three most frequently used words (and their close derivatives) were think (148), refugee (144), and people (128). Other notable word repetitions include good (101), society (93), and learned (90). This indicated to the TR that much of the participants’ output was positive, and reflected on people in society, what the participants thought, and what they learned.

5.1 Background Codes

The initial codes were sectioned into two groups, background codes and descriptive codes. Background codes helped the researcher survey the participants’ understandings of being a refugee, theatre (drama), and the three preset codes of empowerment, resilience, and integration. While the overall approach to this thematic analysis process was through open coding, some preset codes (i.e. a priori codes) were decided before the analysis began. Using a hybrid of preset and open codes is recommended because it combines codes directly related to the conceptual framework and research questions with codes that lead to unexpected emergent themes (TCEC, n.d., p. 1). These preset codes were chosen based on the previously conducted literature review as themes examined through doing AT with YR and YAS. Consequently, the terms empowerment, resilience, and integration were presented to the class at the beginning of the course, and the interviewees were asked to explain their understandings and to rate themselves on a five-point scale during the first and second interviews. There were times that the interviewees opted out of rating themselves, but provided a verbal response. The raw data of the three preset codes is presented in Table 2 below.
The TR was conscientious not to lead the participants by describing any of the preset codes to them or rate themselves in any particular way. If they did not know what a term meant, she offered a definition and asked if they agreed or if that triggered any knowledge of the term’s meaning.

**P1: Can you remember me what resilient mean?**

*EL: Well, my understanding of resilient means you can bounce back. When someone hurts you, you bounce back. You get back up. You try again. You move forward.*

**P1: Ah yes, you didn’t stop.**

*EL: Right, you don’t stop. That’s my understanding. Do you have a different one? Does that make you think of anything else? (...)*

**P1: Ah, during the drama class I have a lot of stress about how we can do it. Maybe I forgot the meaning of the story. But I did again. I just, I remember and do it for myself.**

*EL: You mean, by yourself at home?*

**P1: Ah, at home. And I remember all thing. I did it for the people.**

*EL: So you feel like, to prepare yourself for the performance, you had to do it again? You weren’t sure, maybe it will work, maybe not. But you did it again and again?*

**P1: Yeah. I think because they repeat, repetition is the mother of the learning. Is why I repeated again, I looked at it again. Even I forgot it in the practicing and**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Empowerment (1-5)</th>
<th>Resilience (1-5)</th>
<th>Integration (1-5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Don’t have much”</td>
<td>“Depends on situation, one person is ok”</td>
<td>“I don’t know the society. But at the end of the performance...they feel more friendly.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“In the process of empowering myself.”</td>
<td>“I think I got empowered in the way that a lot of people thought I did good...so I feel empowered to continue.”</td>
<td>“I think I am more resilient now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I am a weak person”</td>
<td>“With time, everyone can recover with problem”</td>
<td>“...When something happen to me, it takes very long time to repair or come back to a normal life.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Interviewee Responses to Preset Codes (author’s creation)
then I feel comfortable.

EL: So you felt like that was sort of ‘acting’ resilient?
P1: Yeah.

If she did not agree with the interviewee’s definition of a term, she asked for clarification.

EL: First, let’s start with empowerment. Do you remember what empowerment means?
P1: You’re available to do something.
EL: Available. Ok. Do you know what power means?
P1: Power? You are strong.
EL: So it comes from power. Empowerment. Do you mean you’re able to do something? Or do you mean available?
P1: Empowerment … available. I can do something. Empowerment.

At times, the interviewees were confident in their understandings of the terms.

EL: Ok, and do you remember integration? What that means?
P1: Integration is the opposite to segregation.

P2: Empowerment is a person who can represent himself and his views in society with being independent, being powerful person, and having the control over self.

When asked to explain the meaning of resilience:

P4: You stand up again no matter how many times you fall down.

The empowerment approach to making meaning of the terms, which are background codes in this case, required learning the participants’ understandings of them. This was also salient when forming the indicators used to measure empowerment and the participants’ sense of integration.

5.2 Descriptive Codes

Initial coding resulted in 46 descriptive codes ranging from self-identified characteristics such as self-esteem and courage to other project-related aspects such as project descriptors and social impact. The descriptive codes involved the participants’ interpretations of their feelings and experiences, and their reflections on the project as well as their lives in general. A second round of coding helped crosscheck the legitimacy of initially assigned codes and initiated the grouping process that would result in the next phase of analysis, Concepts. (These concepts were generated from the combining and rearranging of background and descriptive codes, much like axial codes in grounded theory.) A complete list of codes and their descriptions can be found in Appendix 10.8: Descriptions of Codes. The descriptive codes captured a range of information that, when combined with the narrative codes, helped the researcher to identify concepts, trends, and
themes in the study’s story.

5.3 Concepts

The background and descriptive codes were grouped into nine concepts: refugee experience, integration experience, empowerment experience, participant-identified characteristics, community, quality of project, social impact, sustainability of experience, and negative experiences. To view the codes grouped within the concepts, see Appendix 10.8: Open Coding. Each will be detailed here to provide a foundation for the themes identified and discussed in the following section.

5.3.1 Refugee Experience

The refugee experience concept sheds light on how the participants identify themselves, the challenges and benefits of being a refugee, if and how they’ve recovered from their experience, and how they feel they can interact with the society. All five interviewees described being a YR or YAS as difficult. The reasons ranged from feeling discriminated against, feeling stateless, having limited or no human rights (e.g. fair access to the legal system) to feeling lonely, scared and having nothing. One participant described it by stating, ‘’you start from zero. It’s like being a baby again.’’ Another participant offered, ‘’I hope no one be a refugee.’’ When asked in the second interview to revisit what it meant to him to be a refugee a third said, ‘’I don’t want to think about it. Something is done. Already done.’’

Being a refugee wasn’t always described as a bad experience.

P8: I was very exciting from the beginning and would learn so fast everything because I liked the new people and this country.

P2: ‘’...I feel calm and convenient in Sweden, being a refugee. Because the refugees, they can express what they want, their ethnicity, their beliefs, what they think in their minds.

It may be noted that P2 and P8 have their residence permits.

The participants saw doing a theatre show as an opportunity to share their experiences of being a refugee or UM with the host society. This was in some ways to seek sympathy (’’To spread the message that it’s hard for refugees’’) or to rectify what the participants suspected might be ’’wrong perceptions’’ of refugees.

P2: So the main focus of this drama should be that the audience should come to know about the real situation of refugees. If they have some wrong perspectives and some wrong thoughts and concepts relating to refugees, those wrong concepts, those wrong perceptions should be rectified through this drama. If they have got good and nice thoughts relating to the refugees, it should
increase. And they should embrace the refugees more and more.

_P6: There is a bad picture of unaccompanied minors in Sweden. In news, only Afghan unaccompanied minors are criminals; they lie about their age. They cannot study or go to university. We should prove that we are not like this._

### 5.3.2 Integration Experience

The integration experience concept was discovered as the sense of integration felt by the participants in correlation to the level of acceptance they interpreted from Swedish society. Despite integration being an idea the TR set out to examine, the participants offered more dynamic insight into the issue than was expected.

One of the ways the participants explained their understanding of Swedish society was through cultural comparison. One of the participants compared Iraq, where he was living previously, with Sweden.

_P4: ‘‘…in Iraq, people are warmer, people care. They ask if you’ve had lunch. Here, nobody cares or is going to advise you to study harder. Advice is necessary at my age and at this stage. What do we need to get a better life? But no one tells us in Sweden. Feedback is lacking. In Sweden, people don’t praise you. They don’t give you motivation. Here, you search for approval but you don’t get it._

According to the TR’s observation, one or two participants, those who have been in Sweden longer or have been reunified with their families, seemed to have an easier time. One interviewee claimed not to have ‘‘much problem in the society’’ because he goes to class and has some Swedish friends. Another interviewee said he understood and respected the rules, and he studies, and that is why he feels integrated. A third participant who is new to Sweden and came with his family through the reunification program described his nature as social; he explained his need for a social life and that this motivates him to ‘‘go for integration.’’ Nevertheless, most participants in this study described the hardship of integrating into Swedish society. They called it a ‘‘cold,’’ ‘‘non-communicative,’’ ‘‘not so caring’’ place.

One participant pinpointed the problem that prevents refugees from integrating easily into Swedish society. Simultaneously, he isolated the key to unlocking immigrants’ access to the society.

_P2: When they come in the society of Sweden, it’s different, it’s modern. However, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and maybe Iraq and Syria, they are third world societies so there is a huge difference between the societies. They don’t know the norms and values of the society, they don’t know the language, they don’t know about the system, they don’t know about the concept of life in first world country, and they don’t know how the system of life and personal and social life go on in Sweden. It makes them uncommunicative. It makes them not
to have communication, especially language. Language is having the key source of communication.

5.3.3 Empowerment Experience

P2: Empowerment for me, I think, means a person should believe in himself, that he is worth of doing everything, that he has got the ability, the talent. And a person should make himself satisfied and self-respect, and should make himself have a great vision that he can do. He is a great person in the society, and he is a person who can change. He can do something for the community and for the society, and he is a man or a woman of value.

Several descriptive codes were grouped under the empowerment experience concept including agency and a lack thereof, empowerment and a lack thereof, resilience, refugees as teachers, and recognition/acknowledgement received. Before analysis could begin, a rich understanding of how the participants perceived empowerment within themselves was reviewed. The above quote by P2 paints a detailed picture of his understanding of empowerment and his relationship to it. It has empowering undertones that denote the responsibility YR have to empower themselves. Another participant reinforced that by stating, ‘’so you start to rely on yourself, praise yourself, motivate.’’

P1 explained how the final performance served as an empowering tool.

P1: As a person, when I did the performance, I feel this power. Empowered myself. Because I did my best. And I shared. And I do my act in front of the people. It’s kind of empowered to me. That I am useful.

Another participant, however, reported low levels of empowerment before and after the process. During the first interview he stated, ‘’I am weak. I am not so powerful.’’ At the second interview, when asked directly if he felt that the experience empowered him he said, ‘’Empowered…um, I don’t think myself strong and empowered because I don’t have control of my future. I live at the time, now. I don’t know what happen tomorrow.’’ This struck the TR as an emerging theme of how agency impacts empowerment. Perhaps without a sense of control over one’s life and future, there is no hope for empowering oneself. The participant later said, however, that ‘’…I think I can affect my future. I don’t have control but I can have affect.’’

It is of this TR’s opinion that empowerment for YR and YAS can only begin once some healing has taken place. In their final written reflections, two participants noted how the experience of sharing their stories provided healing.

P8: I think it was a great idea to share our history by a performance on the scene to our audience.

P3: I learned a lot of positive information and I remembered past memories and that made me feel confident.
This demonstrates how the experience of sharing their histories can, however negative, help to relieve some of the weight they carry with them. P2 describes the benefit of sharing their migration experiences with the public.

P2: So we have kept it for long enough. So now I think this is the time that we should make them public. Because we live in a society. We are social creatures. We should make them social. We should associate the feelings with others too. Some things are good to be personal. But some things, I think if you share them with public, it will become more greater and greater. For instance, if I just talk about the life story of P3. his life story of being a refugee, since it’s personal that it was really challenging to bear them. So now he shared his story with others. So now he thinks that this is not only me who bears this story. The same is being endured by others. So I think he has made his load of sorrows and problems and difficulties small. Too small right now. It used to be too big, now the load of his problems has become too small. The same with my load of problems, the same with P4’s load of problems and others. Now It is easy enough to endure it and just walk with.

Assuming a leadership or instructional position can also be empowering. Applied theatre projects, especially those resulting in a final performance, not only teach about empowerment but also give the participants an opportunity to do it. The refugees as teachers code helped the TR to pick out examples of how informing the public helped the participants to feel their value by recognizing their unique knowledge. The participants’ reasons for wanting to teach through performance included wanting to give information about Afghans and the Afghanistan war, to “spread the message that it is hard for refugees,” to show the audience how hard it is to start again, and to show that “there is injustice in Sweden.” One participant said, “prejudice comes from a lack of knowledge.”

Empowerment can also come from being recognized and acknowledged.

P2: So one person told me. He was an English. He said that ‘you all really did well; you all really changed my mind. Now I’ve got a new picture of you all, a new image from your life being a refugee, from your refugee experience.’” So this was a great benefit that we shared our stories because we could change the ideas of a few people. This was a great benefit I think for everyone.

From observation, the participants felt extremely excited and proud directly after the performance. Most people stayed after the show to engage in a short question and answer session. Afterwards, an array of snacks and coffee were offered to encourage audience members to stay and talk with the performers. The TR witnessed many audience members approach the participants after the show, thanking them and praising them.

EL: Did you talk to any Swedish people after the show?
P6: Yeah.
EL: What did they say to you?
P6: They had good reflection.
EL: Do you feel like they talked to you or treated you differently after the show than your previous experiences with Swedish people?
P6: Yeah… I think they wanted to accelerate me.
EL: Accelerate you? Like, make you feel good? Like, elevate you?
P6: Yeah
EL: Do you remember what they said?
P6: Not exactly, but …
EL: That’s ok.
P6: But it was positive.

5.3.4 Participant-Identified Characteristics

The project produced seventeen participant-identified characteristics, expressed by the participants explicitly and implicitly, and gathered through class discussions (participant observations), written reflections, self-esteem questionnaires and interviews. It should be noted that the TR, according to her own understandings and observations, recorded the implicit characteristics by assigning codes to the participants’ descriptions. She attempted to remain as true to the meanings expressed by the participants as possible. The most coded were courage, self-expression, and self-confidence. These three will be presented, along with self-esteem, in this section. A complete list of the participant-identified characteristics can be found in Appendix 10.8: Open Coding. This list helps to imagine the experiences and feelings of the participants, and gives shape to what might be needed to elevate their sense of empowerment and ability to integrate.

This was the first time seven out of the nine participants did theatre. Many of the courage codes involved expressions of this fact, and feelings they had associated with it.

P1: Brave. I learned a lot. It was my first experience that I did it and I shared my experience with people. And I feel brave. And I can speak to people.

P6: It was very good because I have stress before the first performance because it was my first time I perform or act in front of public. But yeah, I think it was very good.

P6 written reflection: It was a great experience. I have absolutely learned many things. It helped me to improve my confidence, to dare to speak in front of the public and also to improve my English knowledge.

One of the participants who had done theatre before commented,

P2: But overall, the process went well because our first experience of doing a theatre in Sweden in a different culture and different people with different ideas.
The AT process provided the participants with an opportunity to learn how to express themselves in different ways using English and non-verbal communication forms. The performance gave them a platform to practice what they learned. At the start of the course, one participant shared his desire to improve his ability to express himself in all his parts: hands, face, arms, legs, and voice. He cited this ability as ‘‘crucial.’’ He further explained,

**P4:** *If you express yourself better, you become persuasive, and that’s crucial if you want to creative positive.*

Another participant explained that it was not only the language barrier that prohibited him from freely expressing himself.

**P8:** *…not just about the language. When I speak my language, I am not so comfortable. I want to speak with more power, more sure, more comfortable…to feel very free when I speak, to be sure of myself.*

After the completion of the project, one participant remarked,

**P4:** *Well, you see, it’s not easy to get the whole package but I’m going there. I think I have gotten better in expressing myself, using my voice better, speak a little louder.*

The majority of the data collected related to self-confidence occurred after the project.

**P6:** *I tested myself that my qualities that I can speak and before it, I didn’t speak in front of the people. Not yet. Not at the school. Yeah, it helped me to improve my confidence.*

**P1:** *Self-confidence. When I was on the stage, this was the first time in front of 50 people, more than, I feel more comfortable... I feel that I can do everything in drama.*

Several participants also mentioned self-confidence/self-esteem as something they hoped to gain from the experience at the start. Follow up interviews would be necessary to determine if this AT process left a lasting impact on the participants with regards to self-expression and self-confidence.

*Self-esteem* was a recurring concept throughout the process, introduced by the participants during the first meeting when asked what they wanted to gain from this AT experience. The TR then decided to conduct a self-esteem questionnaire, before and after, to track their advancement or decline. More than two months passed between questionnaires. The results are presented *Figure J* below.
Seventy-eight percent of the respondents reported elevated levels of self-esteem. The two participants that reported decreased levels both decreased by one point, whereas those that reported increased levels increased by three to seven points (on a 40-point scale). The aggregate increase of scores was 3.33. This denotes a significant boost of self-esteem for most of the participants as a result of the AT project.

In a final journal reflection, one participant shared,

**P7:** *I did not know much about drama and theater, because I was a beginner who would experience an important thing, I do not take it seriously from the beginning because of unconsciousness...It became more important and more important every time we had a drama, I felt I learned something new so I dared to do things I did not expect to do, I gained so much self-esteem, now I learned pretty well how to handle me when I'm on stage, I'm so grateful that I had to join.*

5.3.5 Community

The participants explored the community concept on two levels: friendships within the drama group and forming connections with people in the local area. Several participants discussed the friendships they made within the group with openness and enthusiasm.

**P2:** *I made a strong network of friendship that this is an honor for me that I have got great and close friends. We trust each other and this is a great benefit for me.*

Other participants also commented on the trust built between the participants.

**P4:** *We relied on each other. If somebody wasn’t there or didn’t know what to do, then it was like, we had somehow communication and everybody knew what to*
do…And we learned to trust more in each other.

Related to the wider community, one participant explained the need to form communities when resettling in a host society.

\textit{P2: Because in life you need love. You need love from your people, neighbors, sisters, brothers, parents, relatives, and from your friends, everybody. In contrast, I can tell you that they don’t anymore have the love of their parents here in Sweden.}

By ‘they,’ \textit{P2} is referring to the UM that come here without their families. He likely does not mean that they are no longer loved, rather that here they no longer experience that love in a physical way.

Most powerfully, one participant described how sharing his experience with the wider community helped address his feelings of loneliness.

\textit{P1: And I shared my story with people I feel better because now I think I am not alone. There is someone who wants to help people when they come to this country. When I spoke with audience, I became more comfortable because I feel like a family.}

Here, the participant describes feeling like members of the local community care and ‘want to help,’ causing him to feel more comfortable. This sensation could potentially lay the type of emotional tracks that could form ongoing close relationships with members of the host society.

\textbf{5.3.6 Quality of Project and Social Impact}

Due to the close link between the project’s quality and the social impact it potentially made, these two concepts will be presented in tandem. The quality of this project from the participants’ perspective was examined on two levels: their reactions to the process and their assessment of the performance. They all claimed to have enjoyed themselves and to have learned things ranging from group work to acting to confidence to English knowledge. Most interestingly, a few of the participants seemed to value and understand the AT process as one that reframed their real-life experiences.

\textit{P4: How the world really works. It was that. I got insight into how the real world works. And also a little bit on human nature. What we tend to do, what we tend to not do. I learned a lot and that was satisfying for me.}

He continued with,

\textit{P4: The thing is, in real world you don’t get what you really want; you have to take it. Same in the show; no one is going to give you what you want. You have to take it. You have to take your position. It was a reflection of reality. If you}
want something, you have to do it. Nobody is going to give it to you.

Other participants shared similar reflections.

**P1:** Theatre is one of the best ways to picture a life story, to picture an experience whether the person is a refugee or that experience is from a war or from any prison whatsoever. Theatre can be one of the best ways to visualize or to experience a real life story.

**P8:** And how you can play and act. And something, yeah, explain something how you can be able to make a history visible and how you can make a story show it to other people so they understand.

This connection made between the fictional world of the stage play and process, and the real world, surprised the teacher-researcher as it alludes to Boal’s ultimate intention for Theatre of the Oppressed.

Two participants stated plainly the personal impact the final performance had on them.

**P6:** I am not ashamed like before the performance.

**P1:** That was an outstanding performance and I am satisfied for doing this theater.

However, the process did not go without criticism. One participant expressed his frustration with the lack of responsibility taken by some members of the group.

**P2:** On the other hand, there were some lacks during the drama process, for instance, the members were not so serious and interested in some situations. Some of us were not cooperating really well, and not being attentive during the show. This is the fact that we all have our weaknesses and strengths.

When first asked if they wanted to do a final performance and what purpose it could serve, the participants agreed that it should have a social impact goal.

**P2:** So obviously, when we just for fun through a theatre or drama, we do not perform it for ourselves. We perform it for the society, the public, the people and for the world.

**P1:** If you share your idea with people in the country, politics also became change.

**P6:** To show that there is injustice in Sweden.

After the performance, the interviewees were asked if this social impact goal was
achieved.

**P1:** I spoke with the people. They didn’t know about how Afghanistan’s people they came to Sweden. When I speak with them, they change their idea. And when they speak with you, they speak a little different.

One participant claimed that they were able to change the minds of the audience.

**P2:** This was the biggest outcome of the theatre: that we could persuade many of the audience that their mindset, their ideas regarding to refugees, they are changed. They were changes.

While this claim cannot be proven since there was no data collected from the audience members, it is worth noting that one participant, supported by similar sentiments offered by other participants, viewed the performance as having a persuasive effect on the audience.

Some participants stated they wanted to reach policy makers and refugee advocates in addition to civilians. There were representatives from Rädda Barnen (translated: Save the Children), The Red Cross, and the UNHCR in attendance. The participants, however, did not take the initiative to invite politicians or Migration Agency workers. The TR sent invitations to the Swedish Ministry of Education and the Migration Agency, but received no response.

Advocating for their human rights was yet another way the participants voiced their desire to create social change.

**P2:** Being a refugee in some countries means you are nothing. The refugees, they don’t have value. They don’t have access to their social, basic, and civil rights. Because in some situations they don’t have any documents. They cannot do anything because you are not a citizen of that country. If something is going unfair to you, something is going wrong, you don’t have access to the courts, the officials, in order to just get their rights.

**P6:** They think we came here to have better economic life, but not true. We have come here for better future, to be human.

It appeared that if the participants felt that their human rights were met, they would also feel like equals in the Swedish society—something they did not feel at the time of questioning. It could be argued that the first step toward integration is equality.

5.3.7 Sustainability of Experience

The sustainability concept materialized in the analysis in two ways, and for two reasons. Sustainability was surveyed in terms of the lasting potential of the participants’ feelings
that emerged from this project, and the possibility for the continuation of this project. Additionally, some data emerged on how their involvement in this project had some positive effects on their lives, opening new possibilities for them.

**P2**: I can say that many of the audience that came, I can say, they got something really great, really true, really profitable. Something that had positive energy so they got from this theatre, so this was the purpose: to change the ideas and the thoughts of the Swedish community and I think we did it 90% and I hope we will do it again and again in order to change the all community of Sweden about the refugees.

**P2** describes the feeling and the purpose of the performance, a positive energy to change the thoughts and ideas of the Swedish community. In his assessment, this mission was mostly accomplished, but requires repetition if they were to make a substantial impact on the whole community. **P2** then shares how his involvement in this project helped him to form new connections.

**P2**: So further point that I can mention is this that by the help of this theatre, I could approach to other addresses. This theatre helped me that I should make a relationship and communication with other organizations, other associations that they are doing theatre too. So it’s really now I can see that many doors are open for us to go ahead and expand this theatre more and more.

Another participant described his willingness to repeat the project.

**P1**: I would do it again. I would practice to spend more time because then we see that was too short for us. And was first time we did theatre; it was too much difficult for us. Because at the beginning, we kind of joking. At the end, it was more seriously.

**P1** reflects on how the participants could make more meaning of the opportunity if they were to do it again, signaling a desire to continue the course.

When asked if they achieved what they hoped to achieve for themselves in this process, the participants provided mixed responses.

**P6**: No, but I think learning to improve myself is a long process. It takes many years but I think it was a very good beginning and it was a like, imperative.

**P8**: I thought I wanted to learn how drama and English, about myself. I learned about 50%. I thought this would be very easier and I can learn much more. But I know that it takes time.

**P1**: That was an outstanding performance and I am satisfied for doing this theater. Personally, I learn a lot. It was my first experience to be an actor in theatre and now I learned how can I pantomime and do people laugh as actor.
P4: It’s not white or black. It has been helpful. The thing I wanted to get out of the class, that was my goal, but I never expected to get everything. I hoped I would use this class to get there and I did. That’s the point. You take step by step. It takes time and effort. As long as I’m getting closer.

In his response, P4 depicts the role that an isolated experience can play in one’s personal growth. He describes how the impact of one experience within a larger life context is not easy to assess. However, one takes from experiences what one can to move closer to one’s goal.

This concept captures what materialized for the participants that they might carry into their futures be it new feelings, new friendships, or new contacts that are doing similar work. The question is, will these feelings and connections remain and continue to make a positive impact on the participants and the Swedish community? Also, can this particular project continue in some form, and what would the benefits be? These questions will be addressed in the succeeding sections that address sustainability: 5.5.3 and 6.1.

5.3.8 Negative Experiences

Some examples of negative experiences were touched on in earlier concepts, but this section will present some of the ongoing challenges the participants experienced in their lives, and some criticisms they had of the project.

A constant fear of asylum rejection was present for three out of the nine participants. Two other participants had already received their application rejections and were trying to make a life in Sweden anyway. In total, five out of the nine participants feared rejection or deportation. This statelessness and the anxiety it caused them came up frequently during group discussions, in casual conversation before and after classes and interviews, and on one occasion, during an interview. When asked whether he felt more or less integrated after the project, a participant responded,

P4: I feel differently yes, but not because of the project. I have recently gotten my 2nd rejection so that changes things. But it doesn’t have to do with the theatre. Getting these rejections has made me realize that the world is crueler than I thought. It’s a harsh place and you have to fight to survive. It’s not a place to have fun in; it’s a place to fight. You want something, you fight for it. It’s fight for survival.

Other sources of daily stress for the participants were related to the discrimination they felt because of their ethnicity or for being an immigrant.
P6: In Iran, we were different. Low class. Hazara ethnicity; it was discrimination. Still feel discrimination here.

P6: Swedish people don’t like to make friends with immigrants.

When referring to the Swedish asylum system, P6 felt discriminated against because he was Afghanistani.

P6: Heard that all people have same rights. In news, Syrians are first priority. Afghan lower.

Sweden has announced openly that they prioritize (and will continue in 2018) asylum applications submitted by those fleeing the Syrian war over all others.

Other negative experiences about their daily lives voiced by the participants included feelings of loneliness, the feeling of having "lost everything," and insecurity about their identities. Most youngsters that seek refuge in Europe are unaccompanied. This means they arrive alone, and some anticipate never seeing their families again. That coupled with the trauma that results from the migration experience can cause young migrants to question their identities. In one journal reflection, a participant apologizes for not being cooperative.

P8: Sorry that I refuse. Sometimes think it’s my identity to refuse. When I remember my history and think about experience as refugee and unaccompanied minor, I feel so sad.

Here, P8 questions his actions by examining his identity. He then attributes this confusion about his identity to the sadness he feels for being a refugee. Another participant voiced what he needs from the host society to feel welcomed.

P1: Just we want that they look at us like fellows human, and accept my identity both individual and group identity.

Refugees need to reconstruct their identities as members of a new society, first by feeling accepted as they are and then by working together with other citizens to redefine the country’s cultural and societal identity. However, this cannot begin until they have confirmation that they can stay.

When asked to talk about the weaknesses he observed in the process, one participant expounded,

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12 Afghani Hazaras are targeted by the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan because most of them are Shi’a Muslims (IS members are Sunni) and because of their alleged involvement in the Syrian war as recruited fighters for the al-Asad regime (Rafiq, 2016).
13 In 2016, 63,000 asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors were registered in Europe with 40% from Afghanistan. This figure is down from 96,000 in 2015 (Eurostat, 2017).
P2: Sometimes the members were late for the class. And sometimes they were not doing their role really willingly. It seemed to me that some exceptions, just one or two of our members, they used to pretend that they don’t want to do this project. Or they don’t want to do their role willingly, interestingly. I could figure it out through their faces, their reactions. So we were having some few weaknesses.

This was corroborated in the participant observation notes, which recorded a lack of focus demonstrated by the group one or two occasions. At the last class before moving to the performance space, the TR got upset with the participants and reprimanded them for being on their phones, not knowing their lines, and not knowing where they were supposed to be on the stage. The TR kept a careful attendance record, and at every class there was at least one person late; also, except for one occasion, at least one person was absent. The entire sample attended both performances and the rehearsals that preceded them. However, there was at least one participant that arrived late on every occasion.

Another participant seconded P2’s observation when asked if he would change anything were he to do the project again.

P8: I would change, I think it would be better if people will actually do that and do they best. People they want to be with the drama groups, like a group, we should have good work in the group.

EL: So you’re saying that if it were happen again, you would like people to be more dedicated?

P8: Serious.

Other negative experiences such as loneliness, the feeling of ‘‘having nothing,’’ ‘‘not sure about your identity,’’ losing confidence, self-doubt, class time limitation, the language barrier between the participants and the language of instruction, and a lack of knowledge about ‘‘what was happening to [them]’’ were described by the participants.

Due to a limitation of space, not all negative experiences were reviewed here. Nevertheless, the body of information influenced the formation of themes.

5.4 Themes

The three themes presented here were formed based on repetition of information as well as the TR’s judgment of what was most crucial to the participants’ understanding of the process and the impact it had on them. Themes differ from concepts in that they start to interpret what emerged from the data. Correlations were made to generate meaning, which helped to create an understanding of the ‘big picture.’ The chosen themes were also informed by common themes explored in published literature on AT projects with YR and YAS in formal and non-formal educational settings.

Theme 1: The expression of feelings is subjective and is heavily influenced by young
migrants’ life circumstances that determine their stability as refugees. On days that the participants felt happy and secure, they expressed their feelings related to empowerment, self-esteem, integration, and belonging in a hopeful way; on days that they felt down, they expressed the opposite. The fear-filled journey of a refugee does not end when he or she has landed in a place deemed “safe.” It is not safe for them to relax and imagine their futures if they do not have legal permission to remain. For young migrants, refugee status serves two critical purposes. The primary and most obvious purpose is the status that entitles them to obtain an identity card, a bank account, enroll in school, and seek work, thus beginning a new life. This lays the foundation for the second purpose: feelings of trust, belonging, hope, motivation, giving and receiving respect, and security. Legal status must be granted before feelings of empowerment and integration can be nurtured. While the notion of ‘subjective feelings’ may be an obvious one, studying them in a particular group of YR and YAS helps researchers and teachers to value their intelligences and knowledge grounded in their own experiences, thus contributing to the interpretivist epistemology which desires to understand peoples’ interpretations of their lived experiences.

Theme 2: Empowerment is an individual journey. Empowerment for one person may not equate empowerment for another. For example, the act of getting up on stage might help one participant overcome a fear, taking the first step toward empowerment; while another person might need to play a lead part to feel the empowerment offered by AT pedagogy. The participant-identified indicators set by the participants measure their empowerment. For some, it might mean feeling more confident. For others, it might require receiving positive feedback.

Like the AT process, YR and YAS empowerment appears to have a beginning, middle, and end. It begins with interpreting the concept and determining one’s own indicators used to measure it. Empowerment exhibited in the AT classroom then behaves like a roller coaster, going up and down depending on their real-life circumstances. A higher or lower sense of empowerment is then expressed upon the completion of a creative and collaborative project. However, that level of embodied empowerment is fragile and fleeting if their lives are unstable.

Theme 3: The perceived feelings of (or a lack of) acceptance into society determine young migrants’ ability to integrate regardless of whether their perceptions match the real feelings of host society members and intentions of governmental policies. Discrimination can be debilitating. Some of the participants in this study felt discriminated against for their ethnicity, religion, or simply for being an immigrant. Additionally, some felt that the asylum policies in Sweden discriminated against their nationality. This feeling of rejection prohibits YR and YAS from rebuilding their identities as individuals and as members of a new society, making them feel like the ‘other.’ Meaning, they feel fundamentally exiled from the country they hoped would accept them. Even if this is not the intention of the natives, and/or if policy regulations are placed to protect the ‘most vulnerable’ that does not include them, the participants’ perception of this alienation from the society creates a deep divide between them and the host society, prohibiting integration.
5.5 Findings

To determine the findings, the TR reflected on the data corpus and synthesized what emerged in the concepts and themes to address this study’s aim, objectives, and research questions.

5.5.1 Empowerment

This study found that the positive participant-identified characteristics not only contributed to the participants’ acquisition of empowerment, but also served as indicators for it. While the negative experiences, like a lack of cooperation among group members and ongoing fear of asylum rejection, impeded its growth. Overall, the participants gained empowerment from the experience through explicit statements of increased feelings of empowerment, evidenced improved self-esteem, and the fact that there emerged 15 positive participant-identified characteristics and only two negative ones. The final manuscript, the video of the performance, and final reflection journal entries substantiated high levels of empowerment displayed through original artistic expression, and the confidence with which it was presented, as well as written statements of pride, gratitude, and improved confidence.

However, the empowerment experienced at the moment in which the participants expressed it appeared to dissipate if their lives were in the same state of chaos or confusion as they were before the AT process, or if something happened that caused them to feel uncertain about their futures (i.e. societal rejection or deportation). The primary factor, it appeared, that directed their feelings of agency, identity, and empowerment was their refugee status. Without knowing if they could stay and join Swedish society, few sustained feelings of empowerment carried through the anxiety of not knowing.

5.5.2 Integration

This study did not measure precisely YR and YAS’ levels of integration into the host society since data were not collected from the performance’s audience members. It did, however, shed light on how AT can help hone the skills YR and YAS need to initiate opportunities for integrating. The TR observed that some participants developed their communication, collaboration, and performance skills, which helped them to connect with local people and make a unique and artistic contribution to the local society. The experience of talking with members of the audience about their performance was an integration exercise in itself. The sharing of their stories humanized the refugee experience for some members of the audience (verified in the feedback some of the participants received), thereby validating the participants’ humanity. Through understanding and empathy, a link was formed between the performers and the audience members.

However, the correlation between empowerment and integration in this study was
found to be inconclusive. While the majority of the participants reported increased levels of empowerment after the AT project, this did not appear to directly affect their integration readiness. Despite several of the participants making positive connections with members of the audience after the show, they did not explicitly state feeling more integrated after the project. Perhaps this project was not enough to make the participants feel that most native-born citizens viewed them as equals. It was certainly not enough to remedy how some felt discriminated against in the asylum seeking process.

Integration and empowerment are not states of mind that happen to YR and young asylum seekers. Rather, participants must play active roles in creating in. This can be a ‘catch-22’ in that YR and YAS need to feel somewhat empowered and integrated to feel able to cultivate empowerment and skills for integration within themselves. This study found that feelings associated with empowerment and integration readiness could be triggered by non-formal educational opportunities using AT, which can put this cycle in motion. Empowerment and integration are not only revealed in their actions, but are fragile feelings held within each individual and can change rapidly when their life circumstances are altered or they do not feel well on a given day.

5.5.3 Sustainability of Empowerment and Integration

The participants exhibited excitement and confidence as well as surprise in their abilities immediately following the final performance. Several of them stated explicitly that their involvement in the project boosted their confidence. This was supported by the quantitative data collected through the Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaires. It also sparked in them the development of creative skills in writing and performing, exhibited by their stories and poem that comprised the final manuscript, as well as their performances in the final production. It was clear that the development of such skills and the acknowledgement received for their exhibition sparked a sense of confidence, pride, and belief in the participants’ own abilities, which served as indicators of empowerment. In addition, the participants set out to change the local society’s ‘negative views’ of refugees, and some felt that they communicated this message to many in attendance.

After the project’s completion, several participants expressed hope that the drama class would continue. While the class met weekly, sometimes twice, for two and a half months, it was not enough time to establish permanent feelings of and tools for cultivating sustained empowerment and integration. The TR viewed the participants’ request as a call for sustainability. Ways to achieve sustainability of this project will be addressed in the next section.

14 Catch-22 is a term to referring to a paradoxical situation in which one thing cannot happen before the next thing, which cannot happen before the first thing. An example is trying to answer the question, ”what comes first, the chicken or the egg?” Joseph Heller coined the term in his 1961 novel, Catch-22.
6 Discussion

The themes and findings presented in the previous section uncovered some notable patterns whose implications warrant further discussion. By reflecting on the theories introduced in chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and comparing this study’s findings with the literature previously reviewed on AT with marginalized groups, the problems and possibilities related to YR empowerment and integration can be better understood. The following discussion will first explore how the participants benefited from this project and the sustainability of those benefits, and will respond to RQ1 & RQ2. Then the contribution this study makes to the field of applied theatre, its generalizability, and how it can be replicated internationally will be examined. These will address RQ3 & RQ4.

6.1 How the Participants Benefited from the Research and the Sustainability of Those Benefits

This project appeared to empower the participants as well as encourage them to acquire additional skills for integrating themselves into society. The practice of creation, collaboration, and performance helped the participants make meaning and embrace the value of their histories. Yet, it is also apparent that these feelings and the momentum needed to develop these skills are easily deflated when they encounter barriers, especially asylum application rejection. This is a difficult problem to fix, particularly for young people who have experienced trauma and loss. However, ongoing involvement in AT projects could provide a safe space—an alternative reality or ‘other world’—for YR and YAS to which they can escape when feelings of fear, anxiety, and doubt overwhelm them.

In his writings on TO, Boal formulated the metaxis hypothesis. He derived it from Plato’s idea of being between the human and the divine. It is a state of belonging—as one’s true self and imagined self—to two different worlds simultaneously and completely

(Boal, 1995). It gives participants in any theatre-based activist work the freedom to live in the real world while playing in the imagined world they would prefer to live. For YR, metaxis has an additional third layer. They belong simultaneously to their old lives in their motherland and their new lives in their host country, coping with the distance from their old identities and the construction of their new ones. Additionally, many of them do not feel comfortable with their realities as refugees in their host countries and want to change the circumstances that impact how they feel. Living between the old life and the new reality, and the new reality and the preferred future, is a complex triangle involving loss, survival, and hope. Young refugees and YAS are constantly processing and negotiating these conflicting feelings, and the theatre space can help bridge those gaps by creating a boundary-less imagined reality where feelings and ideas can be explored. If a sense of trust is built in this safe space, as some of the participants in this study declared, then a supportive community can be formed to nurture each participant through this process.

15 Note the example of metaxis in the data in section 5.3.6: Quality of Project and Social Impact
Schininà (2004) theorizes that community building in difficult circumstances must involve three components: relationships, communication, and creativity (p. 35). Like the ‘parachuting into’ (and out of) practice warned against in section 4.7.1: Generalizability and Sustainability, Schininà reinforces the harm that can be inflicted when international ‘saviors’ disappear or maintain only feeble contact after a one- or two-month workshop (Schininà, 2004, p. 34). To remedy this, it is crucial that efforts are made to ensure that the community takes hold of its future according to its own models (empowering approach). This requires that the participants are involved in the identification of problems, activities, and proposed solutions from the start, which concurrently introduces a cooperative and trust-building sense of community. Schininà also mentions the need for creativity, namely theatre activities, as essential to building community. He quotes Eugenio Barba, Italian author and theatre director, and pioneer of the field of Theatre Anthropology:

*The image of theatre that guides me is not that of action that unifies, but that of a circle of encounters and barters. Various people gather around an action that binds them and allows them to debate, to discover a territory, a time, in which to exchange something. It is the very fact that each one can deepen his knowledge of his own specificity that creates the solidarity between them* (Barba, 2001, n.p. in Schininà, 2004, p. 32)

This formation of community works in both directions. The development of individual identities in a space with others doing the same builds community based on a shared experience and the overt and covert acknowledgement of similar challenges and potential solutions. Simultaneously, this community, this safe space, provides support for individuals to form their identities. Empowerment theory would also argue that while individual identities are forming, so is a group identity.

A common theatre game (also played in this study’s class) called, *Mirrors* requires a pair of participants to face one another and to mimic the movements and facial expressions of the leader. Eventually, after switching leaders several times, there is no leader, only followers of each other as they continuously flow through motions. This activity serves as a physical representation of Barba’s mention of the discovery of territory, the exchange, and the deepening of knowledge of oneself through connection with others. Discovering new knowledge about oneself as an outcome of togetherness, reflection, debate, and exchange can translate into a deeper awareness of one’s individuality along with a group’s potential to create change.

Real and lasting change, however, takes time, cooperation and persistence. The discussion of sustainability raises the importance for TRs to maintain meaningful contact with the participants and find ways for the school or host organization to continue to offer the educative activities visited during the project, ideally guided by the participants. To address this, the TR may run the theatre class again in the autumn of 2018 with Ensamkommandes Förbund Stockholm. She will also carefully document the lesson plans and learning goals to give to EFS a handbook with the curriculum that outlines how
to lead the course. Ensamkommandes Förbund Stockholm is an organization for UM run by UM and YR that promotes leadership by encouraging the members to run projects, classes, demonstrations, etc. This TR will work with EFS to encourage one or two of the participants from this study to facilitate the drama (theatre) class using the detailed handbook described. She will also follow up on offers to perform the final show in other venues, and in other cities in Sweden.

Moreover, the preservation of feelings and relationships that resulted from this project would require the participants to be proactive in the continuation of their empowerment experience. They would need to take the ‘feelings’ of empowerment learned in this process to try ‘being empowered’ in their daily lives. To become empowered, they must “be the primary agents of their own liberation” (Boff & Boff, 1986, 31 in Breton, 1994, p. 34). However, according to Breton (1994), oppressed groups cannot be empowered if they continue to be deprived of dignity, resources, and control. The feeling of empowerment that emerges from AT work can only go so far in helping the participants empower themselves. Yet, this does not mean that it is not a task worth pursuing. If YR and YAS feel that no one cares for them, they are far less likely to care for themselves and their futures. The empowering feelings and the integration skills that accompany them need reinforcement through ongoing AT projects. An initial project must be repeated or evolve into similar projects while the original TR maintains contact with the participants.

To accomplish this, perhaps the concept of empowerment necessitates further exploration. Rather than treating empowerment as a singular concept, the discovered indicators (self-esteem, pride, etc.) help to understand empowerment as a complex and dynamic model that is unique to each person. Put another way, empowerment is an individualized model made up of a unique set of participant-identified characteristics that define empowerment for them. Additionally, as time passes and they mature, this complex model and the indicators (or characteristics) it contains might change. Like individual learning plans for students with special needs in schools, AT projects could be used for identifying and embodying what empowerment means for each YR by (1) uncovering the indicators they use to construct it, (2) assist the YR in acting upon this sense of empowerment by writing and performing a play about their refugee experience or another topic of importance to them, and (3) gain feedback from the audience. Concurrently, this sharing with the audience could spark a dialog between the YR and those in attendance, which can create pathways for integration. It is arguable that the more integrated YR feel, the more empowered they can become.

The learning process taken by AT could help the participants understand what empowerment means to them, which is knowledge they could carry with them. If they better understand what they need to feel empowered, they could utilize that in other areas of their education, and in their daily lives. Taking that self-awareness with them outside of the AT classroom makes that knowledge gained sustainable.

The findings in this study suggest that if YR and YAS have agency over their lives and futures, then AT projects have great potential to empower them and equip them
with skills they need to integrate into the society as long as the projects take an empowering approach and make efforts toward sustainability. If the participants do not exhibit agency, the work is less likely to make a lasting impact. However, it can still cultivate creativity and other positive characteristics that can help the participants feel more confident during and immediately after the experience. This researcher contends that the big, global refugee crisis is best treated with small, ongoing, local solutions.

6.2 Contribution to the Field of Applied Theatre for Young Refugees and Generalizability

This study contributes most uniquely to the field of AT due to its long and carefully described process (especially the explicit use of AR), its unique final production, and the variety of data collected. Most AT projects reviewed prior to this study examined single workshops or one- or two-week classes. Also, few studies involved an original production that was written and performed by the students about their migration experiences. Most contributory, this study collected a wide range of qualitative data and used triangulation to compare them, allowing for higher levels of validity and reliability.

While it is challenging to generate a theory of how exactly AT empowers and integrates young migrants based on one case study, the ‘whether it can’ is confirmed. That is to say, the results from this study show that AT can help YR and YAS cultivate empowerment and skill readiness for integration if it begins with a clear and agreed-upon understanding of the concepts and the participant-identified characteristics that mark their growth. This means taking a strengths-based approach using AT and TO, or similar theories, as guides. Beyond the understandings of their experiences (arrived at through discussion with the participants), the practice of performing and storytelling can help the participants make meaning of their histories and share them with the public, which can empower the participants. When empowered, due to feeling that they have contributed to the society, they can be ready to take actions toward integration. If a young person does not feel empowered to integrate him or herself, little can be done. Change cannot be forced on those who are not prepared to make it. However, if apprehensive newcomers need more and different opportunities to begin learning to empower and integrate themselves, then small, community-based projects like this can have significant impact.

While the small sample in this case study makes generalizing across a larger population and across borders difficult, the trends already discussed present a powerful potential for using AT with YR and YAS in any context. Supporting Bryman’s assertion about the generalizability of the theory behind case studies in section 4.7: Quality Criteria, Rowley (2002) discusses generalization as something that ‘’can only be performed if the case study design has been appropriately formed by theory, and can therefore be seen to add to the established theory’’ (p. 20). This study confirmed both the need to determine participant-identified indicators for the growth of individual empowerment and that the development of individual empowerment promotes group empowerment and visa versa, which supports empowerment theory. However, it did not go so far as to track the individuals’ participant-identified characteristics and tailor the
curriculum to each participant separately. This project therefore, in the end and somewhat unconsciously, emphasized group (or community) empowerment through the writing and performing of the final show, and by observing the effects that it had on the members of the group. It did so by assessing how the participants felt in terms of empowerment, resilience, integration, and other feelings at the start, during, and after the AT project.

The other theories used to develop this project were Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed (PO) and Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed. This project supports that the notion that participant-centered and dialogic aspects of AT can help to examine issues of local importance and collectively imagine solutions to address societal problems or inequities. Rather than only thinking about how different they would like their circumstances to be, this project enabled the participants to talk about and act upon their desires to be seen and for their experiences to be validated by each other and the local population. Whether that translated into their actions in the real world and sparked lasting social change, expressed by TO as the ultimate goal, is undetermined. However, the onset of feelings of empowerment and developing skills for integration as tools needed for individual transformation and social change were confirmed by this study.

6.3 International Repeatability

Each case study using AT will be different considering the language and cultural differences in each country, not to mention the access to or lack of resources that might be available. Applied theatre is flexible in this regard because it can take place in any setting, in or out of a conventional theatre, and needs only the minds, bodies, and voices of the participants. What is important is that the process is one that is tailored to the individuals, uncovering their specific identities and desires for change. If executed well, this process should help lay new emotional tracks\(^\text{16}\) for the YR and YAS to recover from any trauma and empower them to integrate into their host societies, and move forward in their lives as ‘agents of change\(^\text{17}\).’

The key to replication across international contexts is to design projects that keep in mind the common thread among all YR and YAS, and the careful documentation of this process. While there is no ‘universal refugee experience’ according to the UNHCR, this common thread includes the feelings and needs that result from being a refugee, regardless of where they come from or where they land. Therefore, AT projects need not only commitment from the TR, but a care-filled investment in their individual journeys that consider their vulnerabilities and strengths. Applied theatre work can happen in any language, in any country, with any amount of resources as long as the TR is sensitive and mindful to the hurt, loss, fear, joy, hope, and pride that each participant feels on varying levels, and helps them channel that into their original work. Additionally, the TR must be deeply invested in the success of the project, which promotes trust and a sense of achievement in the group (or community). This then helps the group identity to form.

\(^{16}\) The idea of ‘laying new tracks’ to help refugees heal from previous trauma is discussed in Balfour et al., 2015; Cahill, 2014; and Nicholson, 2005.

\(^{17}\) Discussed in Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007 and labeled a ‘transformational approach’
which can live on after the conclusion of the initial project.

With the careful detailing of the AT process used and theories that assist in it, along with thorough consideration and description of the context, researchers can identify more common threads among different case studies that help them to ‘zoom in’ on best practices. This researcher believes that if AT practitioners understand this and empathize with the participants while implementing an informed, carefully designed AT project using an empowering approach, an empowering impact will be made, albeit potentially only temporarily. This warrants, however, only more replication.
7 Reflections on Research

Action research was an effective and appropriate method for this research. It helped the TR balance the roles of teacher and researcher, and guided the research toward taking action to benefit the participants. This was most appropriate since the TR discovered that this project qualifies as activist or emancipatory research, a field that has grown in educational research in the last three decades\(^\text{18}\) (Behar-Horenstein & Feng, 2015). The AR look-think-act cycle (Figure F: Action Research Cycle) was used throughout the project’s execution to help identify what was of most importance to the participants with regards to their feelings of empowerment and integration readiness. It then allowed for the participants to manifest their desires in a theatre performance that had a great impact on them. Lastly, it helped them and the TR to reflect on what this impact meant and how, potentially, to maintain the empowering feelings associated with it.

The reflection phase of AR also revealed some gaps in this study. The participant-identified characteristics that served as indicators to measure the empowerment experienced by the participants were analyzed as collective indicators as opposed to individual ones. Only after the analysis was completed did the TR realize that each participant had his own understanding of and desire for empowerment, which contained a unique set of indicators, and those indicators should have been tracked. If she were to repeat this study, she would find a systematic way to assist the participants in self-identifying their empowerment indicators and then involve them in assessing their own sense of empowerment as an empowering activity in itself. She would encourage them to be mindful if/how their interpretations of empowerment change, and if their indicators to measure it change or stay the same. This involvement of the participants in their own evaluation could help create sustainable vehicles for them to continue evaluating and cultivating their sense of empowerment beyond the project. It could do this by equipping them with tools to observe and create empowering actions or exercises to use in their daily lives.

As the TR conducted her analysis and report write-up, she began to question where the line falls between PAR and action research. When designing her study, she assumed that the terms were essentially interchangeable. She thought that as long as the participants were actively participating, the method was participatory. However, as the research progressed, she began to understand that PAR requires the participants’ participation in all stages of the process. The participants were involved with identifying and analyzing the problem, assisting in developing the lesson plans, and writing and preforming the play. However, the sample was not involved in the analysis of the data corpus, nor did they confirm this study’s findings. The TR decided on the potential future of this project by assembling a formal course description and lesson plans for the continuation of the drama class at Ensamkommandes Förbund Stockholm. A desire to continue the class and repeat the performance was voiced by the students, however, and therefore has potential for members of this sample to be involved in further action taken

\(^{18}\) Emancipatory research is a research perspective of producing knowledge that can benefit disadvantaged people. It uses an interventionist research design that designs with and for people that may be marginalized (Noel, 2016).
It is worth noting that this project only achieved the third stage (out of five) of the empowerment process. It identified the problems related to refugee empowerment, enrolled the participants in inspiring each another to work toward overcoming the problems (conscientizing), and created an action to institute the change they wished to see. It did not, however, reach the fourth and fifth stages of mobilizing (starting a movement involving the oppressed and non-oppressed) and overcoming oppression. This project did, nevertheless, incorporate all three steps of EE: listening, dialog, and action.

One of the main purposes for doing case study research is for the researchers’ own learning process in developing skills needed to do good research. According to Flyvberg (2006), ‘‘If researchers wish to develop their own skills to a high level, then concrete, context-dependent experience is just as central for them as professionals learning any other specific skills” (p. 225). The TR gained a wealth of knowledge by conducting this study. For, while she has extensive experience teaching drama, she had no previous experience studying the process using social science research methods. This taught her many things, among them the delicate power dynamic that often exists between the teacher and the participants. However intentionally the TR worked to lead a democratic and empowering process that eliminated power dynamics, her mastery of the language of instruction (English) and the participants’ lack of fluency reduced shared control over the process. The participants were required to express themselves in a language most of them were not comfortable with, and this limited their ability to understand, express themselves, and contribute. She would recommend that future AT projects are conducted in a shared language, or if not, that the aims of the project include to teach YR and YAS the language of the host country. Also, the TR wondered if, since she taught many of the participants the word empowerment and helped them to understand the meaning, they were more inclined to use the term when describing their experiences of the drama class.

The use of NVivo to identify and organize codes was enormously helpful for uncovering codes that may have otherwise gone unnoticed and for the validity it contributed to the research’s findings, as opposed to the TR relying solely on her intuition. Nonetheless, intuition played a substantial role in the formation of themes and theory.

Ultimately, the results of this study allude to neglected areas of research and further questions. The specific topic of this study does not yet have a large body of published research. While there are some studies published on the various uses of AT with marginalized youth, there are few that address integration, and even fewer that address how to cultivate empowerment among YR and young asylum seekers. This presents an opportunity for further study. A longer and more comprehensive study with a larger sample size, including girls, would allow for stronger and more generalizable (of theory) conclusions to be reached. The collection of follow up data about levels of sustained empowerment and integration skills among the participants would add perspective on the effectiveness of AT pedagogy for these purposes. International
replication in different contexts, with participants of different backgrounds, and different languages of instruction would also help to zoom in on the aspects of AT pedagogy that best empower the participants and transcend the differences between them. Furthermore, the questions for future research raised by this study include, (1) can AT projects go beyond the presentation of a performance to create connections between YR/YAS and native citizens? And (2) could a more exact definition for YR/YAS empowerment be developed to help guide participants when using ET and/or TO to facilitate AT studies?
8 Conclusions

This study served as an experiment to examine whether AT pedagogy could contribute to empowerment, assisting in the integration of young refugees. Along the way, much was discovered about ethical and effective techniques for doing this based on the use of AR, an examination of previous case studies, and the participants’ input. The meanings behind empowerment and integration first required exploring, then the ET and TO (with contributions from Freire’s PO theories) required understanding, the approach and activities determined and navigated, the action (final performance) agreed upon and executed, the data gathered, and the analysis conducted to identify indicators, themes, findings, further actions, and theory through comparison with previously published studies.

This study found that AT projects could cultivate empowerment and skills for integration readiness for YR and YAS when using ET and TO as well as a strengths-based, democratic approach. The creation and performance of a final show, as an action to promote social and individual change, can be empowering and integrating opportunities in themselves if the participants are proud of their work, and if it is well received by an audience of native citizens. Certain precautions need to be taken, however. The concepts need to be understood and agreed upon by the sample and their TR at the onset of the project, and a system must be created to establish and track the individual participant-identified characteristics that measure their feelings associated with the concepts. Each individual will have a distinctive understanding of the concept(s), and will need to determine his or her own unique set of indicators to measure it/them. These individualized indicators can be uncovered using AR, but must be done with careful, participant-involved planning and a transparent description of the research process. Additionally, for empowerment and integration readiness to last, ways of repeating the AT process, or aspects of it, need to be established by the teacher-researcher. In theory, after enough repetition, the participants will possess the tools and self-awareness to implement empowerment and integration readiness in other aspects of their lives.

The refugee crisis is a global problem that requires the involvement of local, community-based solutions. We cannot only depend on governments, schools, and humanitarian organizations to heal and integrate young refugees and asylum seekers. The integration process, which requires the migrants to feel empowered and equal, will take time and must involve educative projects like this one to help societies form new, diverse and inclusive identities. Theatre has a transformational capacity for individuals and society, and when applied and repeated, can create real and lasting change.

To view the participants’ final performance featured in this study, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw5qd7E-SDQ&t=945s
9 References


Migrationsverket (2018a). Sweden is the third largest recipient country of quota refugees. Migrationsverket. Retrieved from https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-


10 Appendices

10.1 Hand-drawn Study Design Map
10.2 Participant Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Research: Drama for Empowerment with Refugee Youth

Introduction: You are being invited to participate in a study conducted by Elise Lammers from the Department of Education at Stockholm University. This study is part of a Master thesis. Participation is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether to participate.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a youth (ages 15-24) in refugee or asylum-seeking status.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the growth or renewal of empowerment, resilience, and other self-identified, need-based characteristics through drama activities. This will be studied with the young people that enrol and attend this drama class with Ensamkommandes Förbund Stockholm (EFS)

Procedure: If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to attend all Sunday classes (13:00-16:00) from January 21 until March 25, and to keep a journal documenting your experience(s). All classes will be held at Barnrättsbyrån, Hornsgatan 83 in Stockholm. Journals will be provided. Classes will be held in English.

If you are below the age of 18, you will need parental or guardians consent to participate in this project. A guardians consent form will be provided for you, and must be signed and dated by your guardian or parent.

You might also be asked to do the following things:

- Attend a one-on-one audio-recorded interview with the researcher at the beginning and after the 10-week course.
- The researcher will ask you to share as much information as the participant is comfortable sharing
- The interview will last 30-45 minutes
- Participate in a focus group (group discussion) at the beginning and after the 10-week course
Potential Risks and Discomforts: The participant is allowed to refuse to answer any questions in the interviews, focus groups, or classes for any reason. The participant can also choose not to participate in any given activity during the class. The participant should take physical responsibility when engaging in the drama work to avoid injury to him/herself or anyone else.

Confidentiality: Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the participant will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with their permission, including names. Audio files of the interviews will be coded and password protected. Only the researcher will have access to audio files as well as transcriptions of the interviews.

Participation and Withdrawal: If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. But the researcher asks for you to notify her if you choose not to continue. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Contact: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Elise Lammers at +46.76.913.0761 or eliselammers@gmail.com. You can also contact the thesis supervisor at or by calling the university.

Consent: Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate in the project and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You make keep this letter for future reference. Thank you for your participation.

Participant’s name (print):________________________

Participant’s name (signature): ______________________ Date:__________

Researcher’s name (print): __________________________

Researcher’s name (signature): ______________________ Date:__________

Department of Education
Stockholm University
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Sweden
Address: Frescativägen 54
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Telephone: +46 8 16 20 00
Fax: +46 8 15 31 33
Introduction: Your child/dependent is being invited to participate in a study conducted by Elise Lammers from the Department of Education at Stockholm University. This study is part of a Master thesis. Participation is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask any questions before consenting to your child/dependent’s participation.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the growth or renewal of empowerment, resilience, and other self-identified, need-based characteristics with refugee youth (ages 15-24) through drama activities. This will be studied with the young people that enrol and attend this drama class with Ensamkommandes Förbund Stockholm (EFS)

Procedure: Classes will be held every Sunday from January 21 until March 25 (13:00-16:00) at Barnrättssbyrán, Hornsgatan 83 in Stockholm. Classes will be held in English. Students will be asked to keep a journal documenting their experience(s), and some will be asked to volunteer for interviews and/or group discussions. Journals will be provided.

Potential Risks and Discomforts: The participant is allowed to refuse to answer any questions in the interviews, group discussions, or classes for any reason. The participant can also choose not to participate in any given activity during the class. The participant should take physical responsibility when engaging in the drama work to avoid injury to him/herself or anyone else.

Confidentiality: Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the participant will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission, including names. Audio files of the interviews will be coded and password protected. Only the researcher will have access to audio files as well as transcriptions of the interviews.

Participation and Withdrawal: If your child/dependent volunteers to be in this study, and you consent, he/she may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. But the researcher asks for someone to notify her if they choose not to continue. Your child/dependent may also refuse to answer any questions they do not want to answer.
Contact: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Elise Lammers at +46.76.913.0761 or eliselammers@gmail.com. You can also contact the thesis supervisor at xxxxxxxxxxx or by calling the university.

Consent: Your signature below indicates that you consent to allow your child/dependent to participate in this drama project, and that you have read and understood the information provided. You make keep this letter for future reference. Thank you.

Guardian’s name (print): ______________________________

Guardian’s name (signature): ___________________________ Date: ________

Researcher’s name (print): ______________________________

Researcher’s name (signature): ___________________________ Date: ________
10.4 Interview Guide 1

Estimated length: 30-45 minutes (audio recorded)

Questions to be sent to volunteers in advance.

Keep in mind Extension questions (Can you tell me more about that?), Encouragement (You’re doing great, take your time) and Example questions (Can you give me an example of what you mean?).

1. In 5 minutes or less, can you tell me something about what it’s like to be a young refugee? (Grand tour question)

2. Tell me what you know about Drama/Theater. (Grand tour question)

3. How can Drama help young refugees?

4. What do you hope to get out of this Drama class? (If they answer improved English, ask them to explain why this is important to them.)

5. Do you understand the terms: empowerment, resilience, and integration?

6. If so, to what level do you consider yourself empowered, resilient, and integrated into Sweden? You can describe it using a 5-point scale, 1 being low and 5 being high.

7. What other characteristics (in general) do you think refugee youth in Sweden need? Such as: higher self-esteem, better communication skills, improved well-being, stronger ability to focus, stronger sense of identity, etc. (If they agree with identity, ask them to define if they mean individual identity or group identity (as immigrants, refugee youth, Muslims, etc.)).

8. If we were to do a final performance for an audience, who would you want the audience to be and what would you want the purpose of the show to be? For example: for pure entertainment, to share with your friends (and families if they are here) what you learned in the drama class, to teach the general public in Sweden something about you, etc.?
10.5 Interview Guide 2

Estimated length: 30-45 minutes (audio recorded)

Questions to be sent to volunteers in advance.

Assure them that today I am the researcher, and if they have criticisms or negative experiences they are willing to discuss, they should feel that they can share them without causing offence.

Keep in mind Extension questions (Can you tell me more about that?), Encouragement (You’re doing great, take your time) and Example questions (Can you give me an example of what you mean?).

1. How would you describe your experience in this drama project?
2. How do you think the class as a whole responded to the experience of the drama class and performance?
3. What did you learn about yourself during this process?
4. What do you think the group learned during this process?
5. Was there anything you feel like you should have learned but you didn’t?
6. Did you get out of it what you hoped you’d get out of it? (I can remind them what they said in interview 1.)
7. On a scale from 1-5, how empowered, resilient, and integrated do you feel now?
8. Do you feel that the final show served its purpose? (I can remind them what they said in interview 1.)
9. How do you feel the audience responded to the show? Does it change the way you think about Swedish society and your place in it?
10. Would you recommend that other young refugees do something like this?
11. Would you want to do a project like this again? If so, what would you change?
12. How do you feel today about being a refugee/asylum seeker?
10.6 Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale Questionnaire

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. On a whole, I am satisfied with myself.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

2. At times I think I am no good at all.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
   a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
    a. Strongly Agree   b. Agree   c. Disagree   d. Strongly Disagree
10.7 Word Cloud
10.8 Open Coding

**Codes**
- Refugee experience
- Recovery
- Refugee experience pro
- Refugees as teachers
- Integration experience
- Cultural Comparison
- Integration con
- Integration pro
- Integration Sweden
- Personal need-reflections on integration
- Empowerment Experience
- Empowerment lack of Agency
- Agency lack of Resilience
- Refugees as teachers
- Hope
- Identity
- Leadership
- Love
- Pride
- Responsibility
- Self-confidence
- Self-esteem
- Self-expression
- Self-improvement
- Self-reflection
- Communication
- Cooperation
- Courage
- Empathy
- Fear-anxiety
- Loneliness

**Concepts**
- Refugee experience
- Integration experience
- Empowerment experience
- Participant-identified characteristics
10.9 Descriptions of Codes

Background Codes:

_Drama for skill building_: Expressions of what the participants could learn from drama

_Drama-Theatre Defined_: Participants’ understanding of drama and/or theatre, its origins, history, functions, etc.

_Empowerment defined_: Participant definitions of empowerment

_Integration defined_: Participant definitions and explanations of integration

_Refugee crisis_: Comments on the worldwide situation of refugees and some personal anecdotes

_Refugee defined_: Participant definitions of refugees and what it means (to them personally) to be a refugee

_Resilience defined_: Participant definitions and explanations of resilience

_Theatre for refugees_: Participant speculations on how drama could help refugees

Descriptive Codes:

_Agency_: Statements expressing ‘control’ of themselves and/or their futures

_Communication_: Statements related to expressing themselves verbally or non-verbally, or language acquisition

_Community_: Defining community, the need for community and friendships, participants’ personal accounts of building community during this study, creating networks, etc.

_Cooperation lack of_: Descriptions of when the participants did not work well together or disappointed each other

_Cooperation_: Working collaboratively within the group, respecting one another, relying on each other, team work

_Courage_: Expressions of experiencing courage or bravery

_Cultural comparison_: When the participants compared countries, cultures, or religions to describe something

_Empathy_: Accounts of when the participants experienced empathy from local citizens

_Empathy lack of_: Descriptions of when locals or politicians know nothing about their
Experience

Empowerment: Descriptions of what empowerment is to them; how they experience it; why they need or want it; its importance; discussions of empowerment in society; and expressions that indicated a sense of empowerment

Empowerment lack of: Expressions of low or no empowerment

Fear-anxiety: Fear or anxiety related to the performance

Hope: Hope for the future as a result of the performance

Human rights: Descriptions of their need, and lack of, equal human rights

Identity: Explicit statements using the word identity; a desire to better understand their identities and for their identities to be recognized

Integration: Discussions of integration; the challenges they face around it; their desire for it, their processes of doing it, etc.

Integration con: Negative experiences related to integration

Integration pro: Positive experiences related to integration

Integration Sweden: Integration experiences related directly to Sweden

Leadership: A declaration of having learned leadership skills in this course

Learning Process: Descriptions of learning and things learned, in and out of the course

Loneliness: Loneliness related to their life circumstances as refugees

Looking Ahead, Future Plans: Reflections on how to use what they learned in this course in their lives and what they would like to do next

Love: Expressions of the need for love and what one needs to do to obtain it

Participant Descriptors of Performance: Positive feedback on the performance

Participant Descriptors of Process: Positive and negative descriptions of the process

Personal need-reflections on integration: Descriptions of personal integration experiences

Pride: Feelings of pride following the performance

Process: Objectives descriptions of the process
Process class con: Criticisms of the process

Quality: Ideas for how to make the final performance good/worthwhile

Recognition/Acknowledgement received: Feedback participants received from audience following the performance

Refugee experience: Descriptions of their refugee experience

Refugee experience con: Hardships related to their refugee experiences

Refugee experience pro: Some good experiences in Sweden and related to sharing their stories

Refugee experience recovery: Accounts of how the project helped heal some from their migration experiences

Refugees as teachers: Contributions the participants could make or made by sharing their stories with an audience; a desire to teach local citizens about their culture, ethnicity, religion, etc.

Resilience: Responses to interview questions regarding resilience; descriptions of feelings after the performance that demonstrated resilience

Responsibility: An explicit statement of having learned responsibility

Self-confidence: Explicit and implicit statements of feeling confidence in themselves

Self-esteem: Defining self-esteem, stating a need for it; reflections on self-esteem gained from the drama project

Self-expression: The expression that drama facilitates; the need to express oneself; how to express oneself; feelings associated with self-expression

Self-improvement: Descriptions of how they wanted to improve themselves and what they learned that contributed to their self-improvement

Self-reflection: Reflections on observations made about themselves during the process as well as remembering their histories

Social impact: Ways they wanted the project to make an impact on society; expressions of wanting to change negative views of refugees

Sustainability of project: Expressions of wanting to repeat the performance and continue the class