Aspiring to Citizenship: African Immigrant Youth and Civic Engagement in Cape Town, South Africa

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

Based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the city of Cape Town over four months, this dissertation addresses the question how do African immigrant youth experience life and live as ‘citizens ’in Cape Town? African immigrant youth straddle multiple positions, localities and identities: insider, outsider, victim, perpetrator, dependent, independent, child, adult. This dissertation examines the various ways in which African immigrant youth in Cape Town activate citizenship and belonging through civic participation or engagement, often in the absence of formal citizenship. Contrary to claims of immigrant youth as inherently problematic, youth are actively deciding to be the change they want to see in the world surrounding them, looking backwards and forwards to determine their decision to participate in civic engagement in the present. This thesis posits that young people’s notions of themselves and their aspirations (both individual and collective) impact not only their future life-goals and dreams, but can manifest and drive their current actions to embed themselves in their communities and contribute towards the betterment or improvement of these communities. Drawing from youth studies that highlight the individual agency of youth within the larger constraints in which they find themselves in, the dissertation looks at the everyday, informal and localised acts of civic participation, as well as the ways that African immigrant youth leverage institutions (higher education, community organisations) as bridges and platforms for social change. The research demonstrates that civic participation through community engagement allows African immigrant youth to dream and access citizenship and social adulthood, and become a part of society where they are recognised as contributing members.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Immigrant youth and civic participation in Cape Town, South Africa

> *I'm born and raised in Cape Town, but my parents are from two different countries. My dad is Angolan and my mum is from the Congo [but] I've never left Cape Town. When I was younger, it was so confusing. Refugees in South Africa have to renew asylum documents all the time. In school, I felt that kids and myself are so different. Early in the morning at 4am, we would be at Home Affairs and I would be thinking where are my friends?*
>
> *After high school, I realised I was in a bubble. Despite being born in South Africa, I've been struggling to get any documentation. I struggled to acknowledge I exist the way I am existing. That mindset can mess you up. It's a sense of knowing, seeing your friends accomplish things and still be stuck. I want to do things but you don't feel like you can't do anything. When I turned 21, I got lawyers. I really wanted to teach and my lawyers told me to check out Scalabrini, so I went to their website, to their [call for] volunteer teachers. When I [started] teaching adults, I was 21. I knew a bit about their backgrounds, that they were struggling with English. Initially I thought ok cool I'm going to be doing something. [After my] first semester I fell in love with my students, I fell in love with volunteer work.*
>
> *After my degree, I'd like to do a TOEFL course. The more I'm reaching the end of my degree, the more I think about other things I could do. I'd like to end up in an NGO, HR, teaching, involved in a program that helps to uplift people. It can't be a job [that] I'm just getting money from, I need to have personal value as well. I would like to go back to Congo and build a school. I want to do something for myself and the world, and not feel stuck and useless. It's the worst feeling in the world.*[1]

Against a backdrop of xenophobia, violence and exclusion, this dissertation will attempt to answer the question: how do African immigrant youth experience life and live as 'citizens' in Cape Town? This dissertation is an ethnographic investigation about what it means to be an African immigrant youth in Cape Town through the experiences of young people themselves. While research has been conducted on immigrants' outsider status (Morreira, 2010; Gebre, Maharaj, and Pillay, 2011; Matsinhe, 2011) and their ability to integrate into South Africa, this research builds on studies (Scott, 2013; Opfermann, 2019) which focus on how immigrants' agency affects their actions and position in society. This study explores young people's responses to socio-economic and political marginalisation and the kinds of individual and collective agencies employed in negotiating participatory citizenship through community engagement. This study is based on four months of ethnographic research with groups of immigrant youth in Cape Town, South Africa.

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[1] Excerpt from an interview with Rebecca on March 3, 2021, in Tygervalley, Cape Town.

An analysis of the South African legal landscape underscores the need to look beyond legal definitions of citizenship and immigration, especially because legal definitions do not necessarily reflect the lived experiences of those they are meant to define. Alfaro-Velcampy et al. (2017) have argued that, within a South African legal landscape, most immigrants are referred to as 'refugees' regardless of whether they have attained legal status. While immigration has typically been defined as a "relatively permanent" condition (Mangalam, 1982: 2), an individual's ability to identify as an immigrant often depends on wider legal, political and social context. In South African law, the term 'refugee' refers to someone who is fleeing political or social persecution in their home country. This person applies for an asylum seeker permit (Section 22) that can be renewed many times before the Department of Home Affairs determines a final decision about their refugee status, either granting or denying a Section 24 (refugee status) permit. Many youth in this study were in this cycle of multiple applications, renewals and appeals, keeping them in a state of prolonged waithood, a "neither-here-nor-there position" (Honwana, 2012: 20). This does not necessarily mean that youth holding short-term paperwork are defined as 'illegal' by the state. Rather, these youth are examples of many long-term residents in South Africa that continue to exist as non-citizens in the state's eyes. Nevertheless, for this study, the term 'immigrant youth' takes on a more expansive definition, encompassing not just youth born to immigrant parents who are recognised as citizens or who have obtained permanent residency, but also "asylum seekers, refugees, cross-border migrants who are not eligible for refugee status" (Alfaro-Velcampy et al., 2017). This definition is intentionally broader than definitions of citizenship that are defined solely by the state, in line with debates on citizenship which increasingly emphasise its participatory (Lawson, 2001; Lister, 1998), collective (Rosaldo, 1994: 402; Delanty, 2002: 64), social and relational (Nyamnjoh, 2018) nature.

In South Africa, questions around citizenship are particularly contested. The end of apartheid and the country's reconceptualisation as a 'rainbow nation' — as well as South Africa's position in the global economy — have pushed for more migration towards South Africa, particularly amongst those escaping political disruption and violence from elsewhere in the region (Thet, 2014; Lee, 2003; Oyelana, 2016). Chipkin (2007) argues that the post-apartheid construction of a ‘South African’ nation fostered a sense of exclusivity — where “South Africa belonged not to everyone, but to South Africans” (174) — making it more difficult for non-South Africans to integrate into society, despite their initial expectations (Morreira, 2007).

Xenophobia in South Africa can be attributed to a range of historical and contemporary reasons - the end of apartheid, the adoption of a liberal democracy state model, the rise in global capitalism and the resulting hypermobility of capital (Thompson, 1999). Nyamnjoh (2006) argues that “xenophobia often explains, as much as it is explained” (5) by enduring socioeconomic disparities despite promises of the Constitution, slow or underdevelopment, hardship, poverty and assumptions of social and cultural superiority. Contemporary discourse in South Africa around immigrant youth replicate the narrative blaming black Africans for all sorts of economic problems, public health threats and social ills (AllAfrica, 2019; Danso and McDonald, 2001: 115-117; Landau, 2004).

Within a context of anti-foreigner sentiment, contestations around citizenship and belonging are particularly pronounced in Cape Town where refugees and the city court have been battling it out since 2019, when refugees first protested by camping outside the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. They were removed and ended up spending months on Greenmarket Square and occupying the Central Methodist Church until April 2020. In the face of warnings from the Minister of Home Affairs Aaron Motsoaledi to reintegrate or face repatriation, many were relocated to camps in Kensington and Bellville. As of April 2021, these temporary shelters have been closed and amenities removed from the sites, with refugees given the option to repatriate to their countries of origin or reintegrate with local communities (The Daily Maverick, 2021).

At the same time, African immigrant youth see their pathways to social adulthood delayed. Like many youth in South Africa, across the continent and globally, young people struggle with access to jobs, livelihoods, housing, marriage and relationships, experiencing what Honwana (2012) terms “waithood.”

This dissertation's main finding is that, in the context of violence, xenophobia and waithood, African immigrant youth are engaging in civic participation by 'giving back' or performing 'acts of kindness' to renovate and improve their communities. Contrary to claims which view immigrant youth as inherently problematic, youth are engaging in civic participation as a means of demonstrating that they are contributing members of society, staking their claims to both citizenship and social adulthood. This thesis looks at the crucial roles of dreams, aspirations (Appadurai, 2004) and people's notions of themselves. All three roles are not only interconnected; they can become driving forces for engagement in civic participation which contributes to the well-being of others or seeks to change societal structures. Youth are actively deciding to be the change they want to see in the world, looking backwards and forwards to determine their participation in civic engagement in the present.

African immigrant youth, by necessity, balance their desire to be involved in civic engagement and social change with real concerns around their physical safety. Civic participation for African immigrant youth was often unable to take on an 'activist' character, as many immigrants were legitimately afraid to jeopardise their immigration status. Immigrants often feared being identified and detailed by the police who they perceived as using disproportionate force against foreign nationals (Opfermann, 2019). In a country where governmental institutions frequently intimidate, arrest and deport unwanted migrants through targeted operations (Washinyira, 2014; Chiguvare, 2015; Sonke Gender Justice, 2015) and where deviation from bodily ideals of citizenship warrant "strip searches, arrests, detentions, deportations, humiliation, tortures, rapes, muggings, killings, etc."(Matsinhe, 2011: 302f), immigrants often try to keep a low profile (Stepick and Stepick, 2002: 252).

African immigrant youth, caught between a lack of state recognition and the dangers of public activism, are redefining what civic participation looks like through everyday, informal and localised actions. While there has been significant literature on the role of youth in social change (Abbink, 2005), public forms of protests were often not a realistic option for African immigrant youth in South Africa, where risks surrounding political protests are high. This study looks at the everyday and informal civic participation of African immigrant youth — especially in the face of decreased political participation — and new conceptions of citizenship that emphasise its participatory nature. The study finds that youth engage in civic participation through their individual actions: engaging in informal or localised civic participation (that includes helping family members or neighbours), or making use of internet spaces to speak on social issues in safe environments. Youth also used aesthetic techniques of civic participation, using various forms of artistic expression. By understanding civic engagement in relational and reciprocal ways, African immigrant youth also question the ability of citizenship to be defined solely by the state.

Besides informal and everyday acts of civic participation, young people also leveraged institutions — religious institutions, educational institutions and community organisations —as bridges and platforms for social change. Through these relationships, youth were able to magnify their social impact, gaining access to a wider platform to speak on social issues. Immigrant youth who wanted to 'help' or 'do something' were able to meet other like-minded youth, to actively co-create spaces of inclusion for immigrant youth, and to magnify their local impact. Immigrant youth leveraged these institutions to prove that they are contributing members of society, strengthening their ability to attain stable livelihoods. Overall, the research demonstrates that civic participation through community engagement allows African immigrant youth to dream and access citizenship, becoming a part of society in which they are recognised as contributing members.

1.2 Dissertation Outline

Other than the introduction (Chapter 1) and the conclusion (Chapter 7), this dissertation is divided into five chapters.

Chapter Two outlines the different theoretical frameworks that inform this ethnographic study around citizenship, social adulthood, dreams and aspirations. It also points to this dissertation's anthropological significance and its contribution to the body of literature on immigrant youth and civic participation outside the 'Global North.'

Chapter Three details the importance of anthropology and ethnography for this study and the methodology employed. I outline how I navigated entry into the field and reflect on the impact of my positionality in the field in relation to the various research participants. I talk about the challenges of doing anthropology *across*, rather than anthropology from the top or from below, and the extent to which I was successful or unsuccessful.

Chapter Four provides a detailed picture of immigrant youth, specifically the ways in which youth navigate citizenship and belonging amid xenophobia, violence and prolonged waithood. It looks at the role of past experiences (both their own and their families') and the role of hopes and dreams in their decisions to engage in civic participation. I show how youth embody their hopes, dreams and aspirations by being the person they want to see in the world.

In Chapter Five, I look at the everyday, informal acts of civic participation in which African immigrant youth engage. This chapter looks at the ways in which youth engage in civic participation through individual actions; in informal, intimate spaces; and through expressive and aesthetic techniques. This chapter shows how youth, through civic participation, stake their claim to citizenship while questioning the state's ability to define it.

In Chapter Six, I focus on the various ways in which African immigrant youth leverage institutions as bridges and platforms for social change. I pay attention to the agentive ways in which youth leverage their relationships with organisations to create inclusive spaces. Establishing a platform for continued involvement, youth reveal their desires to become a part of society in South Africa in which they are recognised as contributing members.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks

In this chapter, I address the different theoretical frameworks that inform this ethnographic study around citizenship, social adulthood, dreams and the social imagination. I discuss this thesis's anthropological significance and its contribution to the body of literature on immigrant youth and civic participation outside of the 'Global North.'

2.1 Citizenship and civic participation

Citizenship is one of the most contentious issues of the 21st century in both academic and political circles. In many African countries where xenophobia, the weakening of state authority and increased competition for limited resources are common, claims to citizenship are particularly complicated. In a context where rights and 'citizenship 'are unequally distributed across populations, Mamdani argues that the key citizenship question in post-colonial Africa "is not which rights, but whose rights? Who has the right to rights, the right to be a citizen?" (2007: 5).

Debates about citizenship have often conflated two distinct conceptions of citizenship: state citizenship, a legal status of full membership in a particular community; and participatory citizenship, "a desirable activity where the extent and quality of one's citizenship is a function of one's participation in that community" (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 356). Traditional theories understood citizenship as based on the acquisition of civil, political and social rights (Marshall, 1949). However, there has been a paradigm shift from a rights-based discourse to an obligations-based one that focuses on citizen participation (Lawson, 2001; Lister, 1998) in community life, decision-making and other contributions to the collective (Rosaldo, 1994: 402; Delanty, 2002: 64). These participatory notions of citizenship align with conceptions of citizenship that are social and relational (Nyamnjoh, 2018: 57). In "Critical Definitions for the Study of Africa" (Desai and Masquelier, 2018), Nyamnjoh (2018) defines a citizen as "one who has attained social visibility within the community to which they belong" (65). Emphasising responsibility and reciprocity is important for this dissertation, not only because African immigrant youth's actions question the ability of citizenship to be defined solely by the state, but also because youth choose to engage in civic participation in localised, relational and informal ways.

In participatory citizenship, citizens become “political actors constituting political spaces” (Stewart, 1992). Citizenship is an active and participatory process that is not dependent on the state’s benevolence or authority. In a context of widespread migration and immigration, what is the impact on civic engagement, membership or loyalty? Do immigrants’ foreign, transnational roots mean they are less civically engaged in their country of arrival? How do they relate to the broader community differently than South Africans?

Civic participation has often overlapped with politics. Civic participation is defined as “being a member of civic association, contacting public officials, protesting, volunteering, and voting” (Ishizawa, 2015: 265). Past studies on civic participation among immigrants examined political participation (Logan, Darrah and Oh, 2012; Logan, Oh and Darrah, 2009; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 2008; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001; Wong, 2006; Wong et al., 2011). Research shows that children of immigrants are more politically active than immigrants themselves (Hill and Moreno, 1996; Cho, 1999), either through voting (Kellstedt, 1974; Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet, 1989) or psychological identification with political parties (Lamare, 1982). When looking at civic participation as political participation, there has been a demonstrated increase in civic engagement for young people who immigrated as children rather than immigrants who immigrated as adults, reinforcing the importance of looking at immigrant youth and civic participation.

Globally, however, there is a need to investigate the dimensions of civic participation (Putnam, 2000) that do not require formal citizenship, especially as youth political participation is on the decrease (Harris et al., 2010). Furlong and Cartmel (2007) demonstrate how broader social changes affect youth political participation as global market forces increasingly transform citizens into “atomised individuals” (Harris et al., 2010) who exploit the state in order to realise their own interests and values (Putnam, 1993; Braitwaite and Levis, 1998; Mouffe, 2000). There is a need to investigate the types of spaces in which youth civically participate; how their participation depends on different kinds of agency; and how that participation comes to challenge, defer to or, sometimes, effectively sabotage other political spaces (Durham, 2000; Honwana, 2012).

Citizenship and social adulthood are intertwined in this study of African immigrant youth and civic participation in Cape Town, where young people are often painted as inadequate citizens (Harris, 2011) or a “lost generation” (Cruise O’Brien, 1996). African immigrant youth are unable to participate directly in the functions of the collective. They are also dependent on others for social access or subsistence. For these reasons, they are excluded from full participation as citizens (Swartz, 2010). Simultaneously, young people in Africa are reconfiguring “geographies of exclusion and inclusion” (De Boeck and Honwana, 2005: 1). Seeking to escape confining structures, they navigate economic, social and political turmoil (Vigh, 2003; Vigh, 2006) in ways that emphasise“ self-organization, individuality, [and] self-confrontation” (Vinken, 2007: 53). Youth challenge their marginalisation by becoming “self-actualizing citizens” (Bennett, 2003) or “everyday makers” (Bang, 2004).

African youth navigate civic participation (Fokwang, 2008; Fuh, 2012) and their position on the margins (Durham, 2000) by actively re-envisioning the society around them and advocating for social change (Honwana, 2012). For this study, civic participation is defined as any individual or group activity that addresses issues of public concern, employing two of the three modes of participatory citizenship as defined by Westheimer and Kahne (2004). Participatory citizenship addresses the well-being of others, while social justice participatory citizenship seeks to change societal structures. I look at Vromen’s (2003) definition of participation as “acts that can occur, either individually or collectively, that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society that we want to live in” (82-83). I adopt Flanagan and Faaison’s (2001) perspective on civic participation that addresses immigrant youth’s relationships to the state, as well as their relationship to broader society. This broad definition of participation (Smith et al., 2005: 441) is necessary to capture young people’s citizenship practices today. In the face of exclusion from formal political participation, youth are more likely to be involved in informal, socially constructive activity (Harris et al., 2010) than formal, organised types of participation (Roker, 2008; Vromen, 2003). This study pays particular attention to how youth civic participation is a means of attaining the personal autonomy and social recognition they seek as adults and citizens.

This study on African immigrant youth in Cape Town aims to address the paucity of ethnographic literature on civic participation by African immigrant youth outside of Europe or North America. Despite studies on youth civic participation, there is a limited understanding of the ways in which immigrant youth within the African continent experience citizenship, exclusion and xenophobia.

2.2 Transitions, Adulthood, Waithood

In analysing the historical and contemporary trends that impact youth research, many authors (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Durham, 2000; Abbink, 2005) question the extent to which the processes of defining youth (as a category, ideology, identity) affect the type of research that has been conducted. Although many anthropological, sociological and psychological studies have granted the concept of youth an a priori meaning, seeing it as a developmental or life stage, neither the existence nor meaning of youth should be taken for granted (Bucholtz, 2002: 525-528). Anthropology — with its embrace of the fluidity and multiplicity of concepts around immigrant, youth and citizenship — is particularly attuned to capture the experiences of immigrant youth who might otherwise have been excluded from other forms of research, where their participation is dependent on state-granted 'citizenship 'or age categories. This study adopts an anthropological approach to youth (or adulthood) as defined not by age but indexical category.

In a continent facing economic stagnation or decline, dysfunctional healthcare and educational systems, insufficient infrastructure, high employment rates and insecure livelihoods, the majority of young Africans live in waithood, a twilight zone between childhood and adulthood (Honwana, 2012). This waithood is a result of the increasing unattainability of social adulthood (Durham and Solway, 2017), as youth are deprived of its main building blocks: jobs, housing, marriage and/or relationships. For African immigrant youth in Cape Town, their ability to attain legal documentation — and, thus, to be recognised by the state as more than a temporary resident — was the most important factor that kept them in this prolonged period of waithood. This is supported by scholars (Alfaro-Velcampy et al., 2017; Betts, 2010; Andersson, 2014; Andersson, 2016) who have written about the importance of documents in relation to status and survival for immigrants in South Africa.

Generational categories (such as childhood, youth and adulthood) should not be conceptualised as neutral or natural. Rather, they reflect a struggle for influence and authority within a society (Christiansen et al., 2006) in a context of limited resources and opportunity. “Social being and social becoming” (Vigh, 2003; Vigh, 2006), important for both citizenship and social adulthood, can be understood as positions in movement. They are both internally and externally constructed, part of both an individual and collective process (Christiansen et al. 2006: 11).

Moving away from a linear approach to thinking about transitions to adulthood, multidirectional, fluid and contextual approaches allow for varied personal trajectories (Chisholm, 1999). A framework that acknowledges the multiplicity of identities and the agency inherent in youth subjectivities is particularly important for African immigrant youth who occupy multiple positions and temporalities. Within anthropology, there has been a shift towards viewing youth as active agents of change (Bucholtz, 2002). Experiences and subjectivities are key to understanding the complex relationship between structure and agency in youth lives as well as their capacity to make choices in the face of multiple constraints and restrictions (Pollock, 2002; France, 2007). I emphasise youth's agentive capacity to move within or between generational categories. Youth actions reflect this desire to stake their claims to social adulthood.

Keeping an eye towards the experiential and phenomenological aspect of youth — as well as the political and sociological — I look at how youth navigate social adulthood and the external forces that shape their ability to do so (Furlong, 2000), such as parent’s decisions to immigrate. For the purpose of this study, I view immigrant youth as “fully agentive and intentionally active actors” (Fuh, 2012: 504), despite the fact that immigrant youth “are rarely seen as civic actors, creative agents or multicultural citizens in their own right” (Harris, 2013: 5). By focusing on the interaction between agency and social forces, I see how youth navigate through social environments.

Citizenship and social adulthood are intertwined in youth desires to be recognised as contributing members of society. Individualised, informal civic participation, as well as civic participation that leverages institutions, allow African immigrant youth to renegotiate their goals and stake their claims to social adulthood and economic citizenship in South Africa. Fokwang

(2008) has argued that civic participation is an important part of social adulthood, and Flanagan and Levine (2010) argue that civic engagement should be considered a key part of the transition from adolescence into social adulthood.

2.3 Dreams, hopes and aspirations

Dreams and aspirations, as strategies of social mobility, are interconnected topics that have been studied within sociology, development studies and social anthropology. Scholars have used different theoretical lenses to understand the ways in which these topics reveal themselves and influence the decisions people make in their everyday lives. Appadurai argues for the need to view people's visions of the future as concepts of aspiration alongside their lived realities. He argues, "ideas of the future, as much as of those about the past, are embedded and nurtured" (Appadurai, 2004: 1).

This study pays attention to how youth's decisions are both informed by the past and oriented to the future (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Agency here is defined as " a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its 'iterational' or habitual aspect) but also oriented toward the future (as a 'projective' capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a 'practical-evaluative' capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)" (962). In this study, I analyse the ways in which immigrant youth imagine and aspire as central components of agency.

Youth agency and voices – their decisions, hopes, dreams and the ways in which they make sense of the world – are shaped by the social worlds in which they live (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007). "Imaginative acts are materially grounded in social activities" (Weiss, 2002: 93), where the act of imagination is a "negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility" (Appadurai, 1996: 31). This study builds on the need to look at the dreams and aspirations of young people, particularly because of their potential impact on everyday decisions.

Dreams and aspirations are crucial in discussions about citizenship and social adulthood. During late adolescence and young adulthood, people chart a course for their future and "take stock" of the values they live by and the kind of world they want to be part of (Flanagan and Levine, 2010:

160). Young people are “both social navigators of the present and social generators of individual and collective futures” (Christiansen et al. 2006: 21). Citizenship is similarly a balance of “tensions between centripetal and centrifugal forces in the lives of individuals and societies” (Nymanjoh, 2018: 67) in ways that emphasise citizenship’s, at times, contradictory nature: both open and closed, inclusive and exclusive, real and aspirational. The projective capacity of dreams is also essential to democratic participation (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 988). Dreams and aspirations are crucial for this study on African immigrant youth and civic participation, where their everyday motivations stem from both aspirational and imagined conceptions of citizenship and social adulthood.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the different theoretical frameworks that inform this ethnographic study around citizenship, social adulthood, dreams and the social imagination. I discussed this thesis’s anthropological significance and its contribution to the body of literature on immigrant youth and civic participation outside of the ‘Global North.’

Chapter 3: Researching Immigrant Youth - Methodology

This chapter details the importance of anthropology and ethnography for this study and the methodology employed. I outline how I navigated entry into the field and reflect on the impact of my positionality in relation to the various research participants. I talk about the challenges of doing anthropology *across*, rather than anthropology from the top or from below, and the extent to which I was successful or unsuccessful.

3.1 Motivation

The motivation for this study draws from my own childhood experiences of mobility and migration. I also draw from a range of research and professional experiences involving youth who straddle multiple positions, localities and identities (Nyamnjoh, 2018). In 2015, I conducted a study of youth volunteers at the Southeast Asian Games in Singapore. From 2016 to 2019, I worked with immigrant youth at a nonprofit organisation in Somerville, Massachusetts, USA, where I designed and facilitated programmes for youth leadership and development. I moved to Cape Town in February 2020. Reflecting on my own struggles to attain a work visa in South Africa, I wondered about other young people, perhaps without university degrees or “papers” (Alfaro-Velcampy et al., 2017). What happens to those coming from places that are less advantaged? This positioning of myself in the research is important because my own background shapes my interpretation, and my interpretation flows from my own personal, cultural and historical experiences (Creswell, 2007).

3.2 Immigrant Youth Research: Why and How

Researching a population that sits betwixt and between (Honwana, 2012) categories and definitions — youth who straddle multiple positions, localities and identities (Nyamnjoh, 2018) — is, by definition, complex. As argued in Chapters 1 and 2, anthropology, which allows for fluid and contextualised definitions of ‘immigrant ’and ‘youth, ’is key for conducting research on this population.

Anthropological studies have provided important insights on the intricacy of power and agency in the lives of youth, particularly in contexts of poverty and political violence (Hecht, 1998; Montgomery, 2007; Durham, 1995). The research pays attention to the wider socio-political context, specifically the ensuing topology of power, rights, relationships and social structures that youth navigate (Meloni et al., 2015: 110). I attempted to establish collaborative and non-exploitative relationships, place myself within the research, and to look for what has been left out of social science writing (Creswell, 2007).

In this research, it was important to draw from critical youth research on voice and agency (Komulainen, 2007; Oswell, 2013; Spyrou, 2011; Schnoor, 2013). Anthropologists have increasingly recognised youth as subjects capable of meaning-making (Scheper-Hughes and Sargent, 1998; Bluebond-Langner, 1978; Boyden and De Berry, 2004). Youth have the “right to be properly researched” (Beazley et al., 2009). This research investigates what it means to be an African immigrant youth in Cape Town through the experiences of young people themselves. Ethnography is also important to understand how youth actions and imaginings intersect (Meloni et al., 2015) with their civic participation. My approach to ethnographic research draws from social constructivist and feminist research approaches (Creswell, 2007). I sought to research how youth understood the world in which they live and work. Focusing on specific contexts to develop subjective meaning of youth experiences, I relied on participants’ views of their experiences.

Anthropological studies of civic participation (Fokwang, 2008) demonstrate the importance of ethnography in investigating the localised ways in which civic participation is enacted. Within the landscape of South African politics, public forms of civic participation (such as protests) pose high individual risk to African immigrant youth. Ethnography is, thus, important to capture a broad interpretation of participation (Smith et al., 2005: 441) that reflects youth’s citizenship practices today. These are more likely to be informal, socially constructive activities, rather than formal, organised types of participation (Roker, 2008; Vromen, 2003)**.** Through ethnography, we pay attention to “emergent forms of participation” (Siurala, 2000:9) that create new forms of citizenship outside hegemonic models. These participatory forms both redefine the spaces of citizenship and question the state’s authority to define and limit it (Diouf, 2005).

Leaning into anthropologists’ use of the body as an instrument of data collection, each encounter in this dissertation is shaped by my own embodied experiences. The ethnography is both personal and professional,“ two stories that shape and inform each other” (Goodall, 2002: 15).

Youth and I connected on our non-belonging (or contested belonging) in South Africa that created space for an intersubjective encounter. Weis and Fine (2002) have raised questions about whether participants in contexts of xenophobia and violence erase their history or cultural identity. To create an environment where youth would feel safe and willing to talk about their cultural identities and histories, it was important for me to share my own cultural identities, practices and life experiences. In these encounters, we shared knowledge and meaning, our different sensibilities and embodied experiences. The product of fieldwork did not simply discuss youth experiences; it also talked about me and the dialogical process of fieldwork. My fieldwork was a "setting for shifting roles, understandings and misunderstandings, mutual expectations and imaginaries, along with all of their productive potentials and possible pitfalls" (Meloni et al., 2015: 116).

3.3 Researcher's Positionality

In qualitative research, researchers' paradigms or world views narrow interpretive or theoretical stances (Creswell, 2007: 30). These stances shape the population of study, the types of questions examined and asked, as well as data collection, analysis and dissemination. The positionality of the researcher has been a longstanding debate in anthropological literature, particularly around their interaction with participants in the research process. Madison (2005) argues that researchers need to acknowledge their own power, engage in dialogues, and use theory to interpret or illuminate social action.

Throughout my research experience, I was forced to confront my own privileged relationship to migration characterised by my Singaporean passport, my father's (and thus my own) expat lifestyle and my international experiences, including the position I hold as a Master's student at the University of Cape Town. The differential treatment between myself and youth participants based on physical appearance and 'race 'is shaped by historical reasons that continue to impact immigrant realities in Cape Town. When the Dutch first landed in the Cape in 1652, they actively encouraged immigration from white Europeans while restricting immigration from non-whites within the African continent (Nyamnjoh, 2006). The Dutch permitted selected entry to skilled black immigrants and 'honorary whites 'from Asia (Crush and McDonald, 2001: 2). Being Southeast Asian (perceived as Chinese in South Africa), my accent and educational level shaped how I was treated more like a white expat than an African immigrant. As someone of Southeast Asian descent from postcolonial Singapore doing fieldwork in Cape Town, I draw from other postcolonial scholars who have chosen to do their fieldwork outside of 'home ' (Nording, 2020) while attempting to resist the pitfalls of top-down ethnographic research that reproduces traditional hierarchies (Nyamnjoh, 2012).

Anthropological fieldwork often involves discomforts that are continually negotiated. Some of my experiences were important, albeit frustrating. While fieldwork granted me access to high school corridors and classrooms, I was constantly reminded of my status as 'Other 'as a result of my physical appearance, race, gender, languages and more. Many immigrant youth described experiences of being identified as 'Other 'throughout their school and work experiences, consistent with accounts that foreigners are often identified on the basis of a perceived 'otherness,' where "bodily looks, movements, sounds and smells are legible as evidence of imagined citizenship and foreignness" (Matsinhe, 2011: 302f).

When discussing questions of foreignness and otherness here in Cape Town, it is important to reflect on my own positionality and the ways in which my relationships and interactions with participants are shaped by my presence in these spaces. In many of the places that I encountered, or travelled to alongside youth, I was often the only visible non-black and non-coloured person around. My presence was generally met with a lot of attention. I was quite often stared at and, at times, subjected to racial harassment (with comments like 'China!') or cat-called. At times, the attention was directed at both me and the youth, with the questions being directed at youth in a local South African language, often isiXhosa. Many scholars have written about the prevalence of sexual or racial harassment in the field (Hansen and Richards, 2019), but I want to draw attention to the fact that these shared experiences of foreignness between me and the youth were often humorous moments that we unpacked when we returned to a private setting. Laeticia, who had initially encouraged me to take my notebook while we went to run an errand at Nyanga Junction, laughed at her own suggestion when we returned. "If you had brought your notebook to Nyanga Junction, you would have stood out even more!" she said, which had Laeticia and I cracking up on her couch. While I cannot know what it means to embody the experiences of an African immigrant youth who grew up in Cape Town, youth witnessed firsthand the visibility of my own foreignness that, I believe, made them feel more at ease sharing their experiences of discrimination, ostracisation and foreignness.

A key aspect of ethnographic fieldwork is how youth perceive us as researchers. Since age is perceived in relation to questions of social status and power (Cohen, 1994), I positioned myself as a 27-year-old Master's student and youth worker from Southeast Asia. Although many of the youth were younger than I was in biological years, many felt protective of me and my safety. David, born in South Africa to Zimbabwean parents, appointed himself as my 'chaperone 'at Laeticia's birthday party. Despite being in high school, he claimed multiple times that I was "not used to these places" and reminded me that I should go home before it got too dark. The fact that I was not white or European potentially shaped the ways in which youth interacted with me and portrayed their stories. Opfermann (2019), a "white European" (9) researcher who conducted research with Scalabrini youth through a participatory arts process notes in her research an awareness that "participants may have had other motivations to depict themselves as vulnerable victims" (9), potentially in the hope that such depictions would have led to greater assistance. In my own interactions, while youth recognised the structural barriers they faced, their stories often did not centre around victimhood. Youth were fully agentive in their stories, weaving their personal narratives with their histories and aspirations for the future. This could be a result of my 'race 'and the way youth perceived me, our shared experiences of foreignness, my experience as a youth worker, or the fact that our connections were largely facilitated by peers outside the formal structures of an organisation.

3.4 Entry into the field

Fieldwork for this study was conducted in various neighbourhoods in Cape Town, South Africa, with a population of just under 5,000,000. The choice of Cape Town (my place of residence) allowed for a prolonged stay at the research site (Wolcott, 1999) which is important for ethnographers who attempt to minimise the "distance" or "objective separateness" (Guba and Lincoln,1988) between researcher and participant. This decision was also impacted by the changing travel restrictions between provinces because of the COVID-19 virus.

In research with young and marginalised informants, questions of access and related ethical responsibilities are carefully taken into account. Given the prevalence of xenophobia in South

Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2006; Landau, 2004) and South Africa’s history of top-down research (Nyamnjoh, 2012), research on these populations often requires collaboration with nonprofit or advocacy organisations to produce research that highlights the day to day realities and struggles that immigrants face (Alfaro-Velcampy et al., 2017; Opfermann, 2019).

I identified several entry points into this research, taking note of how research with marginalised youth populations often relies on gatekeepers or key informants for access (Meloni et al., 2015). Typically, establishing trust relationships with key informants among community organisation representatives is an extremely difficult task. As a former youth worker who was often the gatekeeper for researchers looking to research undocumented youth, I had a tendency to take the position that research was not the priority of my clients, especially with researchers who had little experience working with marginalised and vulnerable populations. These concerns were preeminent for me as a researcher. In my initial meetings with gatekeepers, I emphasised the ways in which I was mitigating associated risks. As a means of maintaining accountability to community workers, I maintained regular communication with gatekeepers on the progress of my research.

When I approached youth workers, many felt that my experience working with vulnerable youth facilitated the building of trust. Jade, the Programme Manager of UNITE Youth, often started the conversation with,“ I know you probably know this having worked with youth, but I just need to remind you that…” Introductions to youth were facilitated mostly by peers or nonprofit organisation staff whom they trusted and who vouched for me. Often, youth told me they did not have any questions for me because they had already asked their friends. While youth were vague about the kinds of questions asked, I assumed they had asked for an informal character reference. I am deeply grateful to the emotional work and energy of the community workers and youth who facilitated these relationships, without whom this research could not have been completed.

Leveraging and activating different networks allowed me to produce an ethnography of youth rather than an ethnography of an organisation. With multiple entry points to the research, I adopted elements of a participatory approach (McIntyre, 2000), whereby participants took the responsibility to connect me with youth whom they felt would benefit from sharing their story. I interpreted this as a recognition that the study was not merely research but an opportunity from which they too could benefit. As Merry (2006) has noted, in areas of violence and injustice, a dimension of anthropological research is “the slippage between the role of activist and scholar and the impossibility of separating them” (391). As a part of accountability, I ensured that I was not making promises I could not keep. I tried to ensure that my role in participant’s lives was first and foremost as a researcher, bringing a sensitivity to fieldwork issues (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Another important consideration was the fact that this fieldwork was conducted in the COVID-19 pandemic. This caused many pre-existing youth programmes and networks to stop meeting regularly. Activating multiple entry points allowed me to meet multiple people in different networked communities while ensuring that I minimised the individual risk of participants’ COVID-19 exposure. Given that my fieldwork began in January 2021 at Scalabrini and continued from February to April 2021 in other locations, my fieldwork timeline mirrored the easing of restrictions nationally around the COVID-19 pandemic to adjusted Alert Level 1 from 1 March 2021.

3.4.1 Scalabrini

From March 2020 to June 2021, I volunteered with a neighbourhood volunteer group, the Mowbray Community Action Network (CAN), that facilitated my access to several gatekeepers. This included Sally Gandar, a staff member at the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town (Scalabrini), a service-providing and advocacy organisation for immigrants and refugees. Sally facilitated my connections with African immigrant youth as part of Scalabrini’s UNITE youth and UpLearn programmes.

While the research arm of Scalabrini, the Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa (SIMHA), was approving my research, I began volunteering at the organisation (in January 2021) as a means of establishing key relationships and gathering context around immigrant and refugee issues in Cape Town and South Africa. My involvement with, and willingness to participate in, the social practices of the organisation allowed the clients’ trust towards the organisation to be extended to me.

Scalabrini's vision is to foster the cultural, social and economic integration of migrants, refugees and South Africans into local society. In providing their assistance, they advocate respect for human rights and use a holistic approach that considers all basic needs. The Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town ran eight unique programmes. I was a part of two: the UNITE youth programme and the Uplearn programme.

Scalabrini is a three-storey building located on Commercial Street in the centre of Cape Town, a short walk from the Magistrate Court and Home Affairs. The red, orange and yellow painted building is in the middle of Commercial Street, located between two busy streets. Across the centre is an empty lot and a parking garage, and beside it is a construction business. A line of people would often be seen outside Scalabrini waiting to request for assistance but, due to COVID-19, only staff and volunteers were allowed access to the centre. Visitors would press a button to talk to Asha, the long-time receptionist of Scalabrini, who would provide programme details to prospective clients through the intercom. I observed clients getting frustrated by this experience, demanding to know why they could not enter the centre.

The offices were located on the second and third floor, while the first floor contained a large meeting hall with open, gated windows. Sounds and voices from Commercial Street would filter into the building. The second floor of the building houses many of Scalabrini's programmes and contains a small eating area and kitchen. As a result of COVID-19, individual staff desks were placed about half a meter apart from one another with a plexiglass screen in front of them. The third floor contained open plan offices for the English School, Uplearn and SIMHA, the research arm of Scalabrini, together with several classrooms and two computer labs.

From January to April 2021, I conducted research with two programmes: UNITE youth and Uplearn. UpLearn, launched in 2018, works in partnership with the non-profit Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) to support 150 migrants and refugees to obtain fully accredited, competency-based Associates and Bachelor's degrees at no cost to the students. As a new programme, many of the staff at Uplearn had been there since its inception. The team was all female and under the age of 30. Both of the Programme Co-Managers had been tasked with starting the programme. Of the eight staff members, two had been former interns, and three were former students. I volunteered with Uplearn as a Teaching Assistant for the Advanced

Professional Development course with 15 students from 19 February to 23 April. My responsibilities included grading Google Classroom assignments, conducting coaching sessions and hosting weekly Zoom tutorials for 10 weeks. After getting additional approval from Scalabrini to interview Uplearn students, I interviewed four additional participants, one of whom had been my student. The others I met for the purpose of research. Interviews were held at people’s houses or public venues such as restaurants. I typically began my interviews by introducing my dual role as a volunteer and a researcher as well as the nature of my research.

The UNITE youth programme works with high school students to build social cohesion and transformation in South African society by developing and improving skills in leadership and community activism, as well as fostering attitudes that promote respect for all cultures within South African communities. The programme works predominantly with South African youth, running programmes in five different high schools across the city. The programme is run by Jade Henderson, a first-generation Italian-South African; Diana Akokpari, who grew up in Cape Town to Ghanian parents; and Mthetheleli Wontyi, a South African Xhosa man. Jade, the Programme Manager, emphasised the diversity of her team in our first meeting via Zoom before the programme started. I conducted participant observation with UNITE from 12 March to 23 April. The programme staff conducted weekly sessions at each of the high schools, with committed returning students (leaders) meeting in the centre every Friday from 1:30 to 3:30pm. Although, in practice, meetings usually started closer to 2pm. In 2020, the programme included a group of alumni who helped lead sessions at the high schools. Meetings usually began with announcements by Jade or reminders about COVID protocols, before youth were given snacks and time to chat with peers.

My first interaction with youth was the first UNITE meeting of 2021 (after being held virtually for most of 2020). The meeting was held in the large conference room on the first floor of Scalabrini, and chairs were arranged in a semicircle around the room. Jade and Diana were busy taking temperatures, spraying sanitiser and handing out transportation money (R10) for the participants’ journeys home. After seeing that most of the youth had chosen seats far from the front of the room, I found a chair near the front of the room, feeling like this position would best allow me to participate as an observer. Jade tells me I am expected to participate even if I do not know the words or actions to the icebreaker, an experience with which I am comfortable as a former youth worker. Jade tells me,“ They say I can’t dance, and they always laugh at me, but I do it anyway”.

Around 35 youth were in the room on the first day of the programme, and Jade noted that one of the high schools was not in attendance. After a round of check-ins from youth — they said their name and one word to describe how they were feeling — Jade invited me to give a lengthier introduction. In a room where Jade was the only white person, and I was the only other non-black person, students noted my presence with vague curiosity. I told students that I was a volunteer with Scalabrini and would be attached to their programme, as well as the scope and intention of my research. When I told the youth that I was from Singapore, they made an audible ‘ooooo ’sound. Jade later told the group,“ Alison is the first — Singaporean?” She paused to look in my direction. When I nodded, Jade continued,“ that we have had in UNITE.” Despite the reaction to where I was from, youth were generally more interested in catching up with one another. I observed that they mostly spoke isiXhosa with Mthetheleli and English with Jade and Diana. Mthetheleli led the warm-up, which consisted of several call-and-response cheers to energise the group. The series of energisers consist of words in both English and isiXhosa that correspond with particular actions. Over the six weeks of participant-observation with the UNITE youth programme, I attended their weekly leaders meetings and some of their club sessions in the high schools.

Within the UNITE youth programme, many were South African youth. Looking for immigrant youth in the programme was difficult in the first few sessions. I had only spoken with one youth from Zimbabwe. Everyone else had been uninterested in speaking with me, especially since I neither spoke nor understood their language. Unlike researchers who have struggled with finding a particular role to play or a need to feel needed, I was unexpectedly thrust into the role of a youth worker. One of the facilitators was absent on the second session that I attended, and I was given a facilitator guide and told to facilitate one of the three activities they were conducting that day. This experience was quite uncomfortable, especially since a quarter of the youth had never met me before and had mistakenly assumed I was taking over from arguably their favourite facilitator.

3.4.2 Youth associated with the Adonis Musati Project

Another one of the Mowbray CAN coordinators and a staff member for the Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education, Alex Sutherland, introduced me to several immigrant youth who had been a part of Imagining Otherwise, a participatory arts process with young people from the Cape Flats. From there, I was introduced to another network of African immigrant youth who were either actively or formerly engaged in youth programmes by the Adonis Musati Project, another immigrant nonprofit in Cape Town. For this group of participants, I interviewed them outside of a particular nonprofit organisation. As an independent researcher, I emphasised my own role as a non-South African youth living in South Africa engaging in civic participation.

On 5 February, I met with the first youth who subsequently facilitated introductions to other youth. I met six young people throughout the research. I typically began interviews by introducing the nature of my research, emphasising the voluntary nature of the interview and the commitment to confidentiality.

As with many anthropological experiences, familiarity and rapport with participants was established over several weeks. I was fortunate to be invited to a few spectacular encounters. Laeticia, a key participant in my research, celebrated her 22nd birthday just a few weeks after I began fieldwork. The occasion was a celebration, and I had the opportunity to converse with youth in a relaxed setting. Many young people who would have hardly spoken to me out of shyness or awkwardness felt at ease to do so given the convivial atmosphere. My attendance at Laeticia’s birthday party was significant, not just to those at her birthday party, but to Laeticia herself, given the stereotypes around Gugulethu. She had told another youth that “I might be busy,” despite the fact that I had told her I would be attending. Towards the end of the event, Laeticia said to me,“ You’re family now.” It was at this event that I established connections with many immigrant youth and facilitated my ability to build rapport and trust. In many ways, I benefited from partaking in this experience firsthand.

3.4.3 University of Cape Town

My third entry point was through the support of undergraduate research assistants from the University of Cape Town. These research assistants embodied the experiences of mobility, migration and civic participation in complex ways. Despite the image of the anthropologist as the lone researcher, research assistants have often been central to ethnographic practice. They introduced me to their friends and colleagues and, at times, accompanied me for interviews.

From February to April, I met seven youth who were either current or former students at the University of Cape Town. Youth I met facilitated introductions to other youth.

3.5 Data Collection

Once I recruited research participants, I began to participate as much as possible in the activities of youth, collecting descriptions of behaviour through observations, interviewing, documents and artefacts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Spradley, 1980). I spent time hanging out in youth's houses, work places, schools, church services and birthday parties. I also took part in Scalabrini's UNITE and Uplearn programmes, both at the organisation's office and in high schools. I kept detailed field notes and conducted detailed, confidential interviews. If we were in a meeting or group conversation setting, I wrote down notes on a small notepad. If we were actively engaged in an activity where I could not take notes, I participated as a peer and wrote down as many details as I could recall about my activities in the field when I returned home. Participant-observation requires addressing issues such as the potential deception of those being interviewed, impression management and the potential marginality of the researcher in a strange setting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). I recorded all of my observations in a template with different sections for description of activities, reflections, emerging questions, further actions and notes.

3.5.1 Interviewing

Besides having informal conversations at youth programmes, homes, churches and parties, I conducted formal, open-ended interviews with 17 youth. Participants 'ages ranged from 18 to early 30s, although most were in their early twenties and came from countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Zimbabwe, Angola, Burundi, Malawi and Cameroon. All the interviews were conducted in English. Many youth have been in South Africa since they were children, with a select few having moved here in recent years. As much as possible, interviews were conducted at a quiet location free from distractions, although some interviews were conducted in public locations.

In these interviews, I obtained selective life histories and detailed accounts of their hopes and aspirations for the future. I went into this fieldwork with the intention to deliberately avoid the picture of crisis, crime and violence that research seems to point to (Abbink, 2005: 2). Given that much of the research on immigrant youth focuses on their experiences of violence, trauma and suffering, I emphasised at the beginning of each interview that youth should only share what they felt comfortable sharing. As part of a social constructivist approach, I asked general questions so that participants could determine how and what they shared, listening carefully to what people do and say in their life settings (Creswell, 2007). In general, interviews sought to collect information on family background, educational or employment experiences, where they had conducted their schooling as well as their relationship to their country of origin.

In order to avoid asking youth to relive previous experiences, questions around youth experiences focused on their attitudes and experiences with civic participation. I sought to identify the motivations of youth civic participation, and the various types of activities that could potentially constitute civic participation. These questions were framed broadly (What do you do for others? What do you do for the community?). Youth had the option of identifying for themselves what actions constituted civic participation. These types of open-ended questions, avoiding technical jargon, were important to investigate how young people understood ‘civic participation ’instead of focusing on my preconceived notions. I asked questions about their motivations, hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future. Many interviews followed a semi-structured format that lasted several hours instead of a structured format with a pre-determined questionnaire within a fixed time frame. By asking questions relating directly to the spaces in which the interviews were conducted (often youth’s family homes), I attempted to create an environment where youth could lead the direction and content of the interview.

In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, interviews were not recorded and pseudonyms are used throughout this dissertation. I try as much as possible to withhold details of informants ’lives that might lead to identification, although I retained the names of the associations in Cape Town. I avoided conversations that would lead to explicit admission by any participant of lacking legal status, although many participants offered information about their documentation status.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided a detailed account of my fieldwork methods and experiences in Cape Town. Through a presentation of my methods, the evidence collected during fieldwork and reflections on my own positionality, I demonstrate how I negotiated my positionality in changing contexts and conditions.

Chapter 4: Being the change I want to see in the world

4.1 Abstract

This chapter makes three main arguments. Firstly, I look at how immigrant youth in Cape Town respond in the face of xenophobia, violence and prolonged waithood by engaging in civic participation. Secondly, youth draw from (their own and their families') past experiences as well as their hopes and dreams in their decisions to engage in civic participation. Thirdly, youth embody these hopes, dreams and aspirations by being the change they want to see in the world. This helps them navigate their exclusion from formal citizenship and social adulthood.

4.2 Introduction

During my fieldwork, I came across many young men and women who were experiencing great structural barriers to attaining social adulthood and recognition as a citizen. Within the context of xenophobia, proximity to violence and waithood, African immigrant youth are finding creative and innovative ways to navigate towards both adult life (Woolley, 2004) and participatory citizenship based on the social, political, cultural and economic resources available to them. Many African immigrant youth in Cape Town aspire to full personhood and social adulthood through jobs, housing, marriage and/or relationships. For youth who are neither local nor foreign, neither child nor adult, they desire to establish independence from their parents, provide for themselves and their families and contribute to building a better society.

In this section, I look at how African immigrant youth mobilised both their future aspirations and past experiences to manoeuvre through difficult socio-political environments. I look at their motivations and rationalisations to engage in civic participation by becoming "self-actualizing citizens" (Bennett, 2003) or "everyday makers" (Bang, 2004). Young people articulate their dreams and aspirations as a means of weaving their past, present and future together. In doing so, young people respond to everyday difficulties and address structural realities through acts of civic participation. This research demonstrates that "imaginary and real life possibilities" (Swartz, Harding and De Lannoy, 2012: 28) are "materially grounded" (Weiss, 2002: 93) in acts of civic participation that either addressed the well-being of others or sought to change societal structures (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Youth mobilised their hopes and dreams to drive their civic participation as a means of navigating exclusion from formal citizenship and social adulthood. These acts of civic participation, in turn, shaped their hopes and dreams in a mutually reinforcing cycle.

4.3 Xenophobia and Afrophobia in Cape Town, South Africa

In South Africa, where the economy is relatively more prosperous than elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, ongoing institutionalised and physical expressions of xenophobia against foreign nationals (particularly those from other African countries) is widely documented (Matsinhe, 2011; Crush, Ramachandran and Pendleton, 2013; Pugh, 2014; Solomon and Kosaka, 2014; De Wet, 2015; Maedza, 2017; Maedza, 2018). As recently as 2020, the #PutSouthAfricaFirst movement, born in Pretoria, involved marches to the Nigerian and Zimbabwean embassies, blaming foreigners for a wide array of problems such as drugs, child abductions, prostitution and unemployment (Chothia, 2020).

Xenophobia in South Africa against African immigrants often takes on a violent character (Steinberg, 2008; Landau, 2004; Nyamnjoh, 2006). This proximity to violence was a daily reality for African immigrant youth in this research. Laeticia, born to Congolese and Angolan parents, has lived in South Africa since she was 1 years old. She describes her lived experience with xenophobia and violence and the impact of these incidents on her day to day experience:

> *My brother got stabbed here. (Imitates a slashing motion several times against her neck.) He almost passed away. [My parents] didn't even tell him he had to leave, but he didn't have a choice. When they cut you like that, they want to kill you. That was the first time my mother said we're leaving. The second time was the xenophobic attacks. My father's friend passed away. My mother owns a shop selling African foods, and some people came into her shop. They wanted to shoot her. They said, "You're staying in our country. Give us money. You're working here ,so give us money." My mother is an emotional person, and she has fears about many things. If it was up to her, we would leave but, you know, when you want to leave, it's not that easy. You need to have money. You need to know where to sleep.*[2]

This part of Laeticia's story is an example of a narrative about African immigrant youth in South Africa that focuses on suffering. By choosing to focus on their experiences of violence and poverty, these narratives do not explicitly address the agentive ways in which youth take charge of their future. While youth recognised that external factors limited their ability to thrive, African immigrant youth used their creativity to navigate exclusion and xenophobia. Within a context of hardship, hope and dreams have "survival value" (Davies, 2005) as powerful coping mechanisms. Dreams that encompass hopes, goals and aspirations can be "motivationally powerful" (Markus and Nurius, 1987) against daily struggle. For many African immigrant youth, dreams and aspirations are not framed as luxuries, but key to daily existence. While their struggles might be experienced on a day to day basis, the future is something they both actively look forward to and work towards. Laeticia describes what motivated her to volunteer with a youth programme for immigrant youth:

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[2] Excerpt from an interview with Laeticia conducted on 10 February 2021 in Gugulethu, Cape Town.

> *I did three months of giving back to the kids. For me, I'm motivated by women. If there's no food, a father will eat first, but a mother will give the food to her children. It's not just foreigners, but everyone around this area. They taught me, you don't look up to a man. You get up and hustle on your own. Women will go from selling peanuts, to selling chips, to cake, then they have their own salon. I learnt a lot from them. They are training me to focus on being a better person. My siblings are looking up to me. They remember the way they lived back in Angola. My mother said, "Go to high school, college. Be a better person to help me." I don't want to see the change; I want to be the change.*[3]

Laeticia's narrative demonstrates that, in the midst of xenophobia and violence, she is not sitting back waiting for things to happen. Her hopes and dreams are framed by a desire to improve or alleviate the precarious circumstances that characterise the realities of her family and the women around her. She demonstrates her agency in navigating the exclusion and marginalisation she experiences as an immigrant youth and the impact of hopes and dreams on her actions.

4.4 The different faces of waithood

Many youth in this study were in a cycle of multiple applications, renewals and appeals for their refugee status. Some were children of refugees that did not qualify for refugee status and, without their parents, were unable to legalise their stay (Sloth-Nielsen and Ackermann, 2016; Willie and Mfubu, 2016). Others still lived with their parents but had become 'too old 'to remain dependent on their parents' refugee paperwork and were unable to apply for refugee status on their own. Youth struggles with documentation kept them in a prolonged period of waithood, characterised by limited access to employment, higher education and training courses as well as social participation like sports clubs, library cards or school excursions (Opfermann, 2019). An immigrant youth in Opfermann's (2019) study described her lack of a "paper" as "an enemy of progress" (4).

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[3] Excerpt from an interview with Laeticia conducted on 10 February 2021 in Gugulethu, Cape Town.

Gloria's story highlights this state of prolonged waithood, specifically how difficulties experienced in this one area of her life — documentation — continue to have a debilitating effect on her entire life (Dhillon and Yousef, 2007). Her narrative demonstrates that waithood is shaped not only by her experience of waiting, but also uncertainty around how long she will be waiting for:

> *I was using UCT for lawyers. I'm not going to varsity or to work. From 13 to now, 20, I'm stuck in between. Every time at Home Affairs, that's time we're not working. We just wasted time. We've been going there for many years. You need documents in school. When they ask you something, you need to present your documents. I need to apply for college. In Burundi, I would have been able to achieve everything I would have been able to achieve. I'd have access to a lot of things. If they cannot give you your documents, what are you here for? Documentation is the biggest barrier to me achieving my dreams: school, work. I'm wondering, how do I help my parents out? My youngest brother, who's 13, actually got his documents. He got it before he turned 18. But for me and my older brother, they said the system cannot accept you.*[4]

Gloria's story highlights the importance of temporality: not just the directionality of time, but the tempo, the sense of how time passes and how experiences of time are "emotionally shaped" (Honwana, 2012: 27). While she and her older brother are in this position of waithood due to their documentation status, her younger brother, who was granted permanent residency, will likely not experience waithood in the same way. This uncertainty around how long immigrants will be waiting for 'papers 'is supported by the testimony of youth who had family members who had been living in South Africa for decades and were still unable to obtain permanent residency. David, who was born in South Africa, described how time was not a determining factor in whether or not an individual was granted permanent residency:

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[4] Excerpt from an interview with Gloria conducted on February 16, 2021 in Delft, Cape Town.

> *My parents have been here super long, since apartheid years. They don't have permanent residency. My grandmother was supposed to get it. When she applied for permanent residency, she had been living here for 30 years. She was told not to go back to Zimbabwe for two years, but my cousin got sick, so she went back. She gave up on that.*[5]

For immigrants in South Africa, the politics of documentation is a critical site for the politics of citizenship. As a result of xenophobia, violence and limited access to 'papers,' African immigrant youth experience citizenship (as granted by the state) largely through exclusion. However, instead of sitting back and waiting for things to happen, Gloria articulates her motivations to help others, participating in a form of civic engagement that addresses others' well-being:

> *The heart that I have, it's my best strength, biggest gift. People did good to me. Once you get helped, you have the heart to help other people. Since late 2020, I have been helping to provide food for people in need. Last year, many people couldn't work. Children couldn't go to school. The Adonis Musati Project was giving food to youth leaders to give to their neighbours. They came here to give me the food, and I would go to my neighbours. They were grateful. They thought I was a godsend. I was just grateful I was a part of it. I was grateful that I'm helping. It's rare that people come to this side of Delft.*[6]

Gloria's story demonstrates that, despite state and legal structures that limit her ability to access the main building blocks of adulthood (particularly education or jobs), she is staking her claims to participatory citizenship in alternative ways. Her decision to participate in civic engagement is shaped by a desire to 'pay forward 'the help or assistance she has received.

4.5 Drawing from the past and projecting onto the future

Within the context of xenophobia, proximity to violence and waithood, African immigrant youth mobilise both their future aspirations and past experiences to navigate toward adult life (Woolley, 2004). They enact forms of participatory citizenship based on the social, political, cultural and economic opportunities available to them. In this section, I will look at the motivations and rationalisations behind their decisions to become "self-actualizing citizens"

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[5] Excerpt from an interview with David conducted on 23 February 2021 in Wynberg, Cape Town.

[6] Excerpt from an interview with Gloria conducted on 16 February 2021 in Delft, Cape Town.

(Bennett, 2003) or “everyday makers” (Bang, 2004). This section demonstrates that “imaginary and real life possibilities” (Swartz, Harding and De Lannoy, 2012: 28) are “materially grounded” (Weiss, 2002: 93) in acts of civic participation that either addressed the well-being of others or sought to change societal structures (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004).

Scholars on life transitions have argued that adolescence is a stage in which individuals construct a personal identity that connects a sense of a future with a past “in a subjective sense of continuous existence” (Erikson, 1968: 61). Individuals are always “living simultaneously in the past, future, and present, and adjusting the various temporalities of their empirical existence to one another” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 1012). Immigrant youth navigate their everyday choices in agentive ways. Through an incorporation and reconfiguration of past actions, thoughts and structures, they imagine and reshape futures (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). In highlighting their dreams for the future, we see how present actions are shaped by history (Fuh, 2012) and intertwined with the languages of hope and aspirations (Appadurai, 2004).

Immigrant youth’s dreams and aspirations are shaped by migration, specifically notions of personal success that are major tenets of the post-apartheid South African narrative (Swartz, Harding and De Lannoy, 2012:35). Many of the families of immigrant youth had moved to South Africa as a result of collapsing economies, government corruption or dysfunctional social systems in their countries of origin. Their migration to South Africa was shaped by South Africa’s portrayal to other African countries. The transition out of apartheid brought enormous optimism with seemingly endless promises of change and dreams of possible futures. For immigrants, the narrative of a ‘rainbow nation ’allowed them to dream of a future where immigrants like themselves could be included in the conceptualisation of a nation. For many immigrant families, youth represent the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the entire migration journey. Children and youth are often associated with futurity (Christiansen et al., 2006; Cole and Durham, 2008) and youth with a sense of anticipation. African immigrant youth in this study carried the dreams, aspirations and expectations of their families. At the same time, the past — attributed to their family history, cultural background or interactions with family members — featured prominently in their actions and future imaginings.

In Victoria's story, everyday decisions to engage in civic participation are intertwined with her past and their future. I met Victoria through one of my research assistants in the weeks after UCT student leadership had successfully negotiated with the university to address student debt. Victoria, as the first one in her family with a South African passport and the first girl to attend university, describes embodying her family's hopes and dreams:

> *My mum is 46. She has been here since she was 16. She ran from the war. She came here on holiday and then couldn't go back. She had 7 siblings, 8 with her cousin. She was getting money from the Congo and paying for their school fees. Being on her own during apartheid, with her parents in the middle of a war, my parents have been through it. I feel like it's a lot of pressure. So many people have worked so hard to get me to where I am. I'm the first person, the first girl, to get to university. My grandmother had her first child at 15. When I told my grandmother I was going to represent South Africa for debate, she said, "What do you mean you're representing South Africa?" She cried. My parents, they don't consider themselves South African. I don't think South Africa allows them to have a South African identity. For me, it's different. I'm an immigrant when people are speaking to each other in Xhosa or Zulu. At family gatherings, I'm the South African. My goal is to make a lot of people happy. It's a theme that has followed me my whole life. I've always been drawn to the social justice side of things. I want to uplift people, give people opportunities to get them into a better place than where they are right now.*[7]

Victoria's story demonstrates the generationally layered hopes and dreams that immigrant youth carry. She draws upon these past experiences to clarify her motives, goals and intentions in order to identify practical and appropriate courses of action in the present (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 989). Victoria, having obtained South African citizenship and studying at a South African higher education institution, is the success story to which many immigrant families aspire when they migrate to other countries for social and economic opportunities. Victoria's story also demonstrates how youth aspirations are always formed in interaction with others and in the thick of social life (Appadurai, 2004: 10), involving family and their wider community.

Weiss (2002) argues that the act of imagining is fundamental to where, when and how people project their possible lives. African immigrant youth in this study were influenced not just by the hopes, dreams and aspirations of their families, but also the actions of others around whom they grew up. Several studies (Ishizawa, 2015; Coleman, 1988; Musick and Wilson 2008; Mustillo,

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[7] Excerpt from an interview with Victoria conducted on 26 March 2021 in Observatory, Cape Town.

Wilson and Lynch, 2004) find that family influence, through "financial capital, human capital and social capital" (Ishizawa, 2015:267), impacts youth civic engagement. Victoria and Marie's narratives demonstrate the role of parental influence on their decision to engage in civic participation.

As an elected student representative who had been part of the organising committee that directed the protests, marshalling students or ensuring they had enough food and water, Victoria describes the various factors that motivate her to engage in acts of civic participation that seek to change societal (or university) structures:

> *My dad has been here for more than 30 years. When he was at CPUT, the Namibian Society merged with the head of the Refugee Society at CPUT. My dad was very involved in student leadership. In 1993, Chris Hani was murdered, and my parents attended the protest, but people started attacking them. I'm like my dad, but sometimes it's exhausting. For these [recent] protests, I had to wake up at 3am, get my dad out of bed, and we started singing struggle songs. In the protests, sometimes, I got scared. People can tell I'm not South African. My parents get worried when I go.*[8]

Victoria describes her father's own experience in civic participation and his enduring influence on her, including the associated risks as an immigrant engaging in these public forms of civic participation.

Marie, a student at Uplearn born to Congolese parents, attributes her decision to engage in civic engagement to her mother's influence:

> *I think it comes from childhood. There's a community group that would go around in the townships that want to get students involved in helping communities. My mother would pick me up late after school, and we would help old women garden, clean the house, wash cars. Charity starts at home, and it's my mother's influence. We are now trying to develop an organisation that wants to do lots of things for the community.*[9]

Victoria and Marie's stories demonstrate the support structures that enable African immigrant youth civic participation, as well as the role of past actions in their decisions to participate in community engagement. By drawing from the past and projecting onto the future, youth intertwine the past and the future with everyday actions and participation in civic engagement. Their stories also demonstrate a desire to be the change that they want to see in society. African immigrant youth appear to be writing themselves into the ‘New South African ’narrative by constructing their own sense of agency, opportunity and belonging within a wider context of exclusion and marginality.

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[8] Excerpt from an interview with Victoria conducted on 26 March 2021 in Observatory, Cape Town.

[9] Excerpt from an interview with Marie conducted on 26 March 2021 in Summer Greens, Cape Town.

4.6 Being the change

Studies on youth in South Africa (Swartz, Harding and De Lannoy, 2012; Bray et al., 2010) have found that young people speak of their lives with great hope for the future: for South Africa, for their careers and for socio-economic mobility for themselves and their families. For youth in this study, their dreams and aspirations often manifest in the form of lived worlds which they want to inhabit. Youth engage in projective activity as they seek to imagine alternative futures for a problematic present (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 1006). They expressed these ideas of an imagined South Africa by saying, “I want a South Africa that…” or “I want to live in a South Africa that…” They articulate visions of a unified community based on universal rights, solidarity and co-existence regardless of nationality, race or class. Aspirations include both institutionalised forms of citizenship (such as access to rights, housing, etc.), but also access to social and economic membership in South Africa which continues to be denied for many historically disenfranchised South Africans. These claims are not escapist or illusory delusions. Rather, they demonstrate a reflection of reality that youth are a part of constructing. Despite being denied documentation and formal citizenship in South Africa, African immigrant youth, through their imagination, generate a new idea of a South Africa that embraces both South Africans and non-South Africans.

African immigrant youth's experiences of discrimination, violence and exclusion informed their inclusive, universal approach. Their desire to drive community change results in their view of South Africa: a country they want to live in and be a part of building. Youth motivations for civic engagement often encapsulated ideas about the world they wanted to inhabit, the social adulthood and maturity they were trying to obtain, and the type of citizen they wanted to be.

Anthony's story demonstrates the ways in which African immigrant youth actively engage in civic participation to build a new reality from their imagination.

Anthony, the son of Angolan refugees, has lived in Cape Town for 18 of his 21 years. He is one of the most active youth leaders at the Adonis Musati Project, an organisation in which he has been involved since the inception of their youth programmes. Anthony describes his motivation to take on a leadership position within the organisation, and what continues to drive him to participate in civic engagement:

> *I think about my parents and [how] they gave up so much. My dad was working as a security guard on the other side of Athlone, and someone took a bag of coins and threw it at him. There was this time the landlord wanted to hit my dad, and I was standing there. I'm not going to treat people the same. The type of sacrifice [my parents] did for us, I can't be selfish. Sometimes, I'll see my mum so sick, she'll still go to work. When we have no money to go to school, they will walk us to school. I saw pictures of how we were living in Angola: one bedroom, a thin mattress and nothing to eat. I do this to honour my parents. They are my main motivation. I want my parents to not have to work anymore. I never thought of myself as a leader, but I do lead. I built an important relationship with Rustenberg Girls and the Adonis Musati Project. We had a donation drive and got tons of donations. Even till today, they are still giving out donations. We [also] did a lot of things in lockdown. School children are suffering. They aren't going to school. They can't access Zoom or online learning, so we had a tutoring programme. There's projects on social cohesion that helps to bridge the gap between foreigners and South Africans. It's to help them understand how we can put an end to racism and violence against foreigners. I understand [foreigners'] struggles. If I can help people, why not help people where I can? It's in my nature to help people, no matter what hurt or discrimination might come my way. Even if you can't change everyone, if you can change one person out of the whole bunch, that's a start.*[10]

Anthony's story demonstrates how immigrant youth mobilise wider narratives by connecting with a communal immigrant struggle. Immigrant youth play a role in enacting an imagined reality wherein immigrants and South Africans are equal. Youth stories in this chapter demonstrate the ways in which their hopes and dreams for a better future drive their decision to participate in civic participation in the present. These stories demonstrate that youth are well attuned to the major issues faced by immigrants and youth in South Africa, as well as the differential access to citizenship and social adulthood for these groups. Within these lived experiences of xenophobia and waithood, African immigrant youth are choosing to participate in acts of civic engagement that improve the well-being of others or seek to change societal structures (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). These narratives demonstrate that acts of civic participation drive and are driven by hopes and aspirations. Hopes and aspirations are intertwined with acts of civic participation that work to mutually reinforce each other.

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[10] Excerpt from an interview with Anthony conducted on 27 February 2021 in Athlone, Cape Town.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the circumstances of xenophobia, violence and waithood in their day to day lives. I have demonstrated how youth decisions, hopes and dreams are shaped by the social worlds in which they live (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007). By drawing from the past and projecting onto the future, young people are "both social navigators of the present and social generators of individual and collective futures" (Christiansen et al. 2005: 21). Aligned with youth studies that pay attention to youth agency and the structures they navigate, this chapter argues that youth are agentive in weaving their future aspirations and past experiences with everyday motivations to engage in civic participation. In the following chapter, I look at how African immigrant youth are inventing new ways to be a citizen through everyday, informal acts of civic participation.

Chapter 5: Inventing new ways to be a citizen

5.1 Abstract

In this chapter, I look at how African immigrant youth are inventing new ways to be a citizen through everyday, informal acts of civic participation. By looking at how youth engage in civic participation in relational and reciprocal ways, I see how African immigrant youth push the boundaries of what constitutes citizenship in South Africa.

5.2 Introduction: Defining and reframing civic participation

An analysis of African immigrant youth and civic participation poses interesting questions for citizenship. Immigrant youth, like youth across the continent and globally, are looking for new ways to be active citizens and drive change in their societies. Youth engagement in civic participation is no longer policed or monitored by the state; instead, youth choose to carve out their own spaces and avenues for social change (Pattie et al., 2004). Youth are redefining what civic engagement looks like, even if they do not define their actions as political. African immigrant youth in Cape Town understandably avoid political activity, given their experiences of such activity as negative, corrupt and abusive. However, their actions must be seen as political. Young people's practices of civic participation take the form of 'small 'politics (Marsh et al., 2003a; Marsh et al., 2003b; Norris, 2004; Norris et al., 2004). Characterised by its informal, individualised and everyday nature, small politics is increasingly "personal and self-reflexive" (Bang, 2004: 163). In this chapter, I will look at three main types of civic participation by African immigrant youth: individual behaviours, informal actions in intimate spaces and expressive and aesthetic techniques.

5.3 Individual behaviours

In this section, I pay attention to the ways in which immigrant youth attribute their individual behaviours to larger social and political issues as acts of civic participation. The long term nature of ethnography (Wolcott, 1999) allows researchers to pay attention to the everyday behaviours of youth. Carol and Peter describe their participation in 'meaningful 'activities in response to the challenges with which they have seen other youth struggle. Many of the youth in this study described their proximity to violence and crime in the areas where they lived. (Kynoch, 1999; Lambrechts, 2012; Dougan, 2018; Pather, 2018). Within these contexts, immigrant youth's decisions to be role models by helping others or resisting gangsterism are important aspects of civic participation. Carol describes how her decision to mentor other young people stems from her desire to see something different in the upcoming generation:

> *I have a passion for mentoring. I love mentoring people. Within Africa, youth don't have guidance, or they raise themselves. I didn't have a childhood, I was raising my sister's four kids. When I was young, I started this thing in Woodstock. I loved the opportunity to help youth, and they opened up to me. [One of my mentees] tells her husband, "You met me and married me because of Carol." Her mum was a prostitute. She used to say, "Because my mum is a prostitute, does that mean I'll become one as well?" I told her to take my number. After school, meet me here, I will go through your homework. I told her you have the power to decide your future. Your parents don't determine your future. If I hadn't met her at the time, the prostitution cycle would continue. She now contributes to her community.*[11]

Carol's story demonstrates the ways in which her individual actions address the well-being of others in her community and are connected to wider societal issues. Peter, a son of Zimbabwean immigrants, describes his decision to resist gangsterism and crime:

> *I am the first born, and I want to show the young ones that I'm doing something that's improving my life. Here, there's a lot of drugs. Either you're a gangster, you end up in jail or last option is that you're dead. Some people from Zimbabwe don't want to show they're from Zimbabwe, so they do the same stuff. The Zimbabwean guys will tell the South Africans, the thieves, "Oh, Peter has this," so they know where to break in and steal. There are people that will beat you up, kill you for payment. That's why, when you meet a new person, it's difficult to trust them. Young teenagers are trying to hide themselves, but if you don't hide yourself from people, you can motivate them to do good deeds. I have lots of chances to smoke weed, drink alcohol, but I think about my mother and what people are going to say about her. We try to be role models for younger guys so that parents say, "When you grow up, be like them."*[12]

In his decision to actively resist 'immoral 'acts such as gang violence, drugs or crime, despite the possibility of financial benefits, Peter is engaging in civic participation that addresses the well-being. In the midst of poverty, gang violence and crime, youth make an explicit choice to distance themselves from the violent realities that exist right outside their doorsteps. This is an example of a personal strategy of civic participation (Harris et al., 2010) to create social change.

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[11] Excerpt from an interview with Carol conducted on 5 March 2021 in Brooklyn, Cape Town.

[12] Excerpt from an interview with Peter conducted on 5 February 2021 in Delft, Cape Town.

5.4 Informal, intimate spaces

Peter's narrative also describes the risks associated with public, formal types of volunteerism, indicating the need to rethink civic participation as located in these spaces. American scholars on immigrant youth position family commitments as oppositional to public forms of civic engagement (Stepick and Stepick, 2002), often overlooking informal volunteerism, such as helping family members or neighbours (Ishizawa, 2015). However, for some youth in this study, the circumstances in which they lived limited the feasibility of engaging in public forms of civic participation that were not facilitated by family or interpersonal networks. Within a landscape of xenophobia and exclusion, acts of civic participation that happen through "interactivity and connectedness with intimate circles" (Vinken, 2007: 53) are particularly important. Rebecca, born in Cape Town to Congolese and Angolan parents, describes her mother's treatment of distant relatives from the Congo:

> *My mum is always saying, "Wherever you go, be kind." This meant so much for my sister and I, especially when we had nothing financially. My mum does a lot of volunteer work within our family, people who weren't doing much with their lives. My mum would say, "If you come over to South Africa, I will try to support you." I watched how she helped others.*[13]

Rebecca's description underscores the importance of informal volunteerism, including helping family members or neighbours. This could be framed as civic participation, as it addresses the well-being of others. Immigrant youth, who possess more linguistic and cultural capital compared to their parents, often utilise their bilingual and bicultural skills in volunteer activities (Stepick et al., 2008). African immigrant youth who help family members or neighbours are examples of youth who identify with, have a stake in and want to contribute to their communities. These acts of civic participation are crucial to participatory citizenship, where citizens become "political actors constituting political spaces" (Stewart, 1992) and where citizenship is an active, participatory process that is not dependent on the state's benevolence or authority.

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[13] Excerpt from an interview with Rebecca on 3 March 2021, in Tygervalley, Cape Town.

Informal volunteerism also includes engagement in mutually-beneficial, convivial (Nyamnjoh and Brudvig, 2014) relationships with neighbours, where a citizen is "one who has attained social visibility within the community to which they belong" (Nyamnjoh, 2018: 65). This scene in Laeticia's house demonstrates the porous boundary between family and community, as well as youth preference for civic engagement in informal and intimate spaces.

The sun is out this Friday morning, making the beige sidewalks outside Laeticia's house seem brighter. Inside the living room, surrounded by bright green walls and family photos on top of the television, Laeticia and I are seated on a couch with a photo album open between us. "This is Malume (uncle)," she says, pointing to a man in a photograph. "Growing up, we didn't have aunties or uncles. We never got to experience that wider family. It's just me, mum, dad. Always has, always been, but people have welcomed us very well here in Gugulethu. Now, my siblings have their own places, but my mother's grandchildren, me and my siblings grew up in this house. There's lots of memories here. People that used to come here when I was a baby, they'd know these things about me." Throughout the day, several people walk directly into the living room to converse with Laeticia's mother about items they had left in her container or to ask Laeticia to help them with tasks. "See how they just walk in?" Laeticia points out to me.[14]

Laeticia's story demonstrates the 'small or everyday 'acts of civic participation in which she engages: helping neighbours 'children with homework, helping to serve food or wash up at funerals, helping to store items in her mother's container. These acts of civic participation occur in informal and intimate spaces: within their homes, front yards or on the street where they live. In Gugulethu, where Laeticia grew up, she emphasises the ways in which neighbours unite in order to defend or protect each other, what Nyamnjoh and Brudvig (2014) have termed conviviality. Her decision to engage in acts of civic participation that address community well-being in mutually-beneficial, convivial ways allows Laeticia and her family to attain social visibility within their community (Nyamnjoh, 2018).

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[14] Excerpt from participant-observation at Laeticia's house on 10 February 2021, in Gugulethu, Cape Town.

Another informal, intimate space where youth enact civic participation is the Internet. Scholars (Harris et al., 2010; Coleman, 2006) have argued that the Internet is a space of everyday participation because it is used as a social, unregulated and intimate youth space. Much research has been done about how the Internet has facilitated new styles of protest and has been instrumental in creating a different generation of activists (Castells, 2007; Clark and Themudo, 2006) through alternative activist strategies (Juris and Geoffrey, 2009)**.** For African immigrant youth, the Internet allowed them to speak on social issues that were important to them without the associated risks of public, in-person protests. Samuel, a graduate student at the University of Cape Town who moved from Zimbabwe more than 10 years ago, describes his decision not to participate in protests because of the personal risks they pose to:

> *I'm what you call a keyboard warrior. I ask myself, can I fight the oppressor? I calculate about my future. I want to have a family. I can't be stuck as another protestor that goes to participate in a protest. I'm on the keyboard. Here in South Africa, the moment you start to think, I'm not South African, if I protest, it might be legal or illegal. If the police arrest me, the judge might judge against me because I'm a foreigner. The thought is always there in the back of my mind. If you're a foreigner, we might deport you. Just because I'm a foreigner, chances of me getting a fair trial are not high.*[15]

Samuel's story demonstrates the high risks associated with political protests that drive African immigrant youth to engage in civic participation in informal, intimate spaces. This civic participation helps African immigrant youth navigate citizenship and belonging in Cape Town in ways not defined by the state, while challenging the state's ability to define citizenship.

5.5 Expressive and aesthetic techniques

In this section, I look at immigrant youth strategies of civic participation through "expressive and aesthetic" (Siurala, 2000: 4) techniques. In particular, I look at their engagement in writing, arts and participatory arts processes that seek to change societal structures while maintaining a layer of physical safety. The links between civic activism, the arts and popular culture underscore contemporary forms of contestation. Youth make political statements through art, music and writing as a way to shape the society in which they want to live. As argued in Chapter 4, African immigrant youth's motivations to engage in civic participation draw from both their past experiences (of triumph and struggle) and their hopes of the future. Youth turned to art in order to heal from trauma, to write themselves into the dominant narrative or to critique societal structures.

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[15] Excerpt from an interview with Samuel on 26 February 2021 in Claremont, Cape Town.

Many young immigrant women carried the hopes and dreams of their mothers who, having faced a different set of limitations and choices, passed on these hopes and dreams to their daughters. Some youth saw their participation in civic engagement as a way to disrupt the trauma and violence that had been the reality for previous generations, particularly their mothers or grandmothers. In line with feminist research approaches, this study sheds light on what has been left out in social science writing, particularly around domestic violence and the ways in which women struggle with social devaluation and powerlessness within their families (Creswell, 2007). Cindy was a student from Uplearn. After several failed attempts to meet her during the week, Cindy invited me to join her and her mother for lunch at McDonalds in the city centre. Cindy's mother recalled emphasising the importance of education on her three daughters, recognising that they had more opportunities than she had.

From my follow up conversation with Cindy's sister Evelyn, I learned that their mother had gotten married at a young age as a means of escaping a difficult domestic violence situation at home. Cindy describes how her family's history drove her to become a writer and how she views her writing as a medium of civic participation:

> *I want to be a poet or a writer. I want to find a way to heal people through writing, artwork. I find a lot of healing through my writing. I lost my aunt when I was very young, and that's when I started writing. I felt more calm and realised that words can be healing. I thought, if it's helped me that way, it can help others. Some things you don't really know how to process. I published a book with my poems. I want people to feel that comfort from poetry. It gives you a sense of comfort to know someone else has gone through what you've gone through. I want to let people know that, whatever they are growing through, someone else has gone through it, someone else understands. I want to let them know they are not alone, to say, "You've helped me." My ultimate goal is to help people and make them realise that they are capable of healing themselves.*[16]

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[16] Excerpt from an interview with Cindy on 13 March 2021 in the City of Cape Town.

Cindy’s story reflects how immigrant youth are agentive in weaving together past, present and future imaginings. In writing to heal from the past (both personal and intergenerational), they write themselves and their community into being, shedding awareness on social issues such as domestic violence and loss.

African immigrant youth were personally invested in issues such as xenophobia, violence, crime, lack of jobs and opportunities, social inequity, domestic violence and women’s roles in society. Their engagement in participatory arts processes allowed them to weave their personal stories into larger narratives, framing their own stories vis-à-vis their stories categorised by the state and citizens as different. These participatory arts processes worked to build the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004). They allowed youth to see the material products of their abstract wishes, while simultaneously engaging youth to dream and envision distant possibilities regardless of their immediate circumstances. Through the stories of David and Anna, who wrote and performed a play, we look at their actions as “a conscious attempt to address the social, political, and economic issues that impact marginalized communities in ways that hold particular meaning for them” (Magubane, 2006: 215). David, born in Cape Town to Zimbabwean parents, describes the storyline of the play and how its message echoed the experiences of many immigrants in South Africa:

> *The play was about a foreign family that moved to South Africa and, due to peer pressure, their son Daniel became a gangster. I played the foreign family’s neighbour that was abusing his wife, played by Anna. I got into a fight with Daniel, and I burned their house. After that, they had to live in refugee camps. The story really represented what was happening, what a lot of foreigners are going through. Some people are living that life, and it made a lot of people cry.*[17]

This performance can be interpreted as a public disclosure of the oppression and injustice that immigrants in South Africa face. By performing on stage, the event became an “authorized ritual occasion [where] it [was] possible to break the rules” (Scott, 1985: 287). Youth exposed themes that were sensitive and personal to a public audience. In order to “portray and denounce oppressive ‘facts ’in a safe way” (Opfermann, 2019: 9), they blurred the boundary between fact and fiction. This artistic space prevented the audience (and any state or anti-immigrant actors) from holding individuals accountable for the injustices and oppression that were exposed. In these performances, youth like David could display pain and suffering without this pain and suffering being attributed to him, thereby maintaining a degree of anonymity despite the onstage exposure.

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[17] Excerpt from an interview with David on 23 February 2021 in Wynberg, Cape Town.

These artistic expressions allow youth to engage in civic participation that seeks to critique and change societal structures. Anna, a daughter of Congolese parents, describes the inspiration behind another script that is based around a king wanting to marry his daughter.

> *Women in South Africa are abused. We [as foreign women] are abused. If they recognised foreigners, it wouldn't be a woman abused every five minutes, it would be every five seconds. You don't want to see it, because we are foreigners. There was a woman who came to me after the show, and she kept on talking. I got to someone's heart. She was from the Congo. As foreign women, we can't stand up for rights. Us foreigners, us Congolese women, must respect our husband for anything. They can hit us, kill us, we can die for our husband. The story is based on women empowerment from the 80s straight to 2021. My writing is a relief from stress, trauma, depression, from my rape at 10, sexual harassment and rape at 19. This is my life, my story. I want women to feel not powerless, but powerful. I want people to ask, how can the king want to marry his daughter? I love storytelling. I like getting the story out there and changing the way people view things.*[18]

By drawing from her own traumas and writing them into a performative, public script (Opfermann, 2019), Anna writes her story into a wider narrative. By combining her lived experiences with a fictional story, Anna engages in a form of civic engagement that actively critiques the society that allows these acts of violence to occur. African immigrant youth continue to seek recognition as contributing members of South African society through expressive and aesthetic techniques of civic participation. They become advocates for change through their written and visual testimony. Youth, in this study, assert authority on their own experiences, desires and aspirations (Diouf, 2005).

Sandra, a daughter of Cameroonian immigrants, encapsulates the need to view civic engagement as broad and all-encompassing:

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[18] Excerpt from an interview with Anna on 20 February 2021 in Samora Machel, Cape Town.

> *People often underestimate what civic participation is. It's quite subtle, it can be personal relationships, changing minds one step at a time. You sit down and have a conversation. Being curious, curiosity is enough. It's about being an active citizen. Activism is not about how big or how small the actions are. It's the people that make activism possible.*[19]

African immigrant youth engage in new modes of civic participation in order to express their desire to be heard, to be included and to participate in discursive forms of democratic deliberation in a safe environment. Through their civic participation, we see how African immigrant youth are developing a “new biography of citizenship,” characterised by “dynamic identities, open, weak-tie relationships and more fluid, short-lived commitments” (Vinken, 2005: 155) in various types of associations.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at how African immigrant youth are inventing new ways to be a citizen. Through individual behaviours in informal and intimate spaces and through expressive and aesthetic techniques, youth are redefining what civic engagement looks like. Engaging in civic participation that they can do themselves, in local settings, on a project or short term basis results in concrete action rather than ideological debates**.** By connecting their lived experiences to larger social and political issues, their civic engagement actively critiques the society that allows acts of violence to occur. Through their civic participation, I see how African immigrant youth are developing a “new biography of citizenship” (Vinken, 2005: 155) that seeks to redefine citizenship practices while questioning the state's ability to define it. In the following chapter, I will look at how youth leverage institutions to amplify their impact, to create inclusive spaces and to build bridges and platforms for social change.

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[19] Excerpt from an interview with Sandra on 10 April 2021 in Rondebosch, Cape Town.

Chapter 6: Leveraging institutions as bridges and platforms

6.1 Abstract

In this chapter, I look at the ways in which youth leverage institutions (both educational institutions and community organisations) to create inclusive spaces for African immigrant youth and, more importantly, as bridges and platforms for social change. The chapter will look at the ways in which African immigrant youth leverage institutions in order to stake their claims to social adulthood and citizenship in South Africa.

6.2 Introduction

Besides leveraging these institutions as inclusive spaces within a wider context of xenophobia and exclusion, immigrant youth used institutions as bridges, connecting youth directly to avenues of civic engagement, and as platforms to amplify immigrant youth's message for a particularly envisioned world. While research has been conducted on the role of religious spaces in facilitating civic engagement (Diouf, 2003; Stepick and Stepick, 2002; Levitt, 2001), and engagement between South Africans and foreigners (Molins-Lliteras, 2009; Sadouni, 2009), this chapter focuses on educational institutions and community organisations. For African immigrant youth, their relationships with institutions enabled them to occupy a key space between communities and the state.

6.3 Social adulthood and livelihoods

African immigrant youth, like black youth in South Africa (Swartz, Harding and De Lannoy, 2012), aspire to upward mobility, framed by the "constructed landscapes of collective aspirations" (Appadurai, 2004: 31). Often, these aspirations centre on obtaining a good education and acquiring the necessary skills to guarantee employment. Financial independence allows them to support themselves and others. These conceptions of social adulthood are consistent with conceptions of citizenship that emphasise relationships of responsibility and reciprocity (Nyamnjoh, 2018). While jobs are most consistent references for elusive adulthoods, jobs are not things in themselves, and having one is not necessarily the mark of adulthood, or a lack of one its failure (Durham and Solway, 2017: 17). At the same time, African immigrant youth consciously leveraged community organisations in order to attain social adulthood and economic citizenship through access to employment. In the face of steep unemployment and the considerable gap between education and employment (Honwana, 2012), African immigrant youth recognised potential positive correlation between volunteerism and occupational achievement (Wilson, 2012; McFarland and Ruben, 2006; Wilson and Musick, 1999).

However, in analysing how African immigrant youth talked about jobs, I found that recognition as a contributing member of their community was more important than having a job in itself. Youth recognised that organisations offered them a platform where they were recognised as contributing members of the community, even as they continued to struggle with access to jobs and independence in other avenues of their life. In the face of low income and lack of career oriented employment, youth turned to volunteering in order to attain the skills and social standing they seek to improve their lives. Rebecca and Carol describe their experiences volunteering at the same organisation where they were also beneficiaries. Rebecca, born in Cape Town to Congolese and Angolan parents, describes her experience volunteering at the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town as a volunteer English teacher:

> *I wanted to do things, but I didn't feel like I could do anything. I really wanted to teach. and my lawyers told me to check out Scalabrini. When I was teaching adults, I was 21 years old. I was studying in a way. It was a bit scary. I was the youngest one standing among all these people. The more I spoke, the more I realised the little that I have is what I can share. The little knowledge I have could change someone's life. That first semester, I fell in love with my students. It's sad to realise that people have to leave their homes and have no income because of war. Some of my students were qualified as doctors in their home countries, but they are struggling so hard with English. I know a lot of students passed my course. That's when I fell in love with volunteer work, in 2015, and it became an addiction, teaching. The whole thing started before my godmother passed away, because she was teaching as well, to those that haven't had any education. After my degree, I'd like to do a TOEFL course. I'd like to end up in an NGO, in Human Resources, teaching or being involved in a program that helps to uplift people. It can't be a job I'm just getting money from; I need it to have personal value as well.*[20]

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[20] Excerpt from an interview with Rebecca on 3 March 2021 in Tygervalley, Cape Town.

Carol, an Angolan immigrant, describes her experience teaching professional development to other immigrants and refugees:

> *I used to teach professional development for the Scalabrini Centre's women's platform. I grew up by myself, no parents, and I didn't have life coaching. When I was going through Professional Development, I thought, this is what I want to do in life. I liked seeing how I impact others. The women in my class had kids [who] were double my age, but they were listening to me. They humbled me. When I do something, I give 100% of myself. I read books, watched YouTube videos. I was so happy to have ladies come up to me, introduce me to their husbands, kids. I made their communication better. I love working with people. [I] love giving them a different mindset. I want to pour into people that confidence to conquer life. It pushed me to study counselling. It's awesome to use that skill. People come to counselling because they are broken. It's a natural gift for me. I see myself impacting, transforming lives. I'm well equipped to take life on. I have a victorious mindset. I love to see people be a better version of themselves. We made an undeniable mark in their lives. The words I poured in them added value and allowed them to live their lives to the fullest. I feel like I'm doing my job because it's my livelihood, but my passion lies in personal development as a facilitator. I loved that. I felt like I was fulfilling my destiny.*[21]

Carol's and Rebecca's decisions to engage in civic participation was not necessarily for professional benefits; rather, to embody their hopes and dreams for themselves and wider society. Carol and Rebecca were both employed in steady jobs that did not necessarily match with the impact they wanted to have. Their stories demonstrate that youth view jobs not only as opportunities to achieve a stable livelihood, but also to realise their envisioned worlds. In this sense, African immigrant youth express their desire to belong to South African society through jobs that contribute to wider society.

While youth did not necessarily volunteer for financial reasons, it is important to note that this was largely a result of lack of funding for these types of positions. The Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, in particular, has a range of partnerships with volunteer organisations that pair volunteers from the global North such as the United States and other European countries with nonprofits in developing countries.

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[21] Excerpt from an interview with Carol conducted on 5 March 2021 in Brooklyn, Cape Town.

6.4 Inclusive spaces

African immigrant youth leveraged institutions to build their own inclusive spaces amid wider exclusion as immigrants. Creating these inclusive spaces in exclusive places, they succeed in realising a form of participatory citizenship that documentation denies. Many of the high school youth I interviewed were of the few immigrants in their classes. For youth in university, university was a space that enabled them to link their individual experiences with a collective immigrant experience.

I first met Rose when I was tutoring a first-year anthropology course at the University of Cape Town. Rose was born in Kenya to Zimbabwean parents but had been living in South Africa since she was 1 year old. Rose introduced me to a friend of hers, Victoria, a daughter of Congolese parents born in Cape Town. Rose and Victoria's exchange describes the role of university in developing their consciousness around their immigrant identity.

"In university, there's this collective understanding," says Victoria. "We figure out what we're going to do about it. I feel finally accepted in that place. As a child of immigrants, we don't really have that place."

Rose grabs Victoria's forearm to get her attention, adding," We don't really have a place. We exist in both places."

"Exactly," Victoria responds. "What does it actually look like when I can't choose one? South Africa raised me, and my parents raised me, so Congo also raised me. I need to be both. With the xenophobia in South Africa, I can't even identify as South African, even with a passport."[22]

Youth like Rose and Victoria, who are able to connect with others with similar experiences in a university environment, are able to create inclusive spaces within exclusive places. University courses equip youth with the language to connect their individual experiences to a collective immigrant experience.

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[22] Excerpt from participant-observation with Rose and Victoria on 26 March 2021 in Observatory, Cape Town.

Other important inclusive spaces for African immigrant youth in this research were the programmes in which they participated, such as the Adonis Musati Project's youth programmes targeted at immigrant youth in South Africa. Many youth said the inclusiveness of these youth programmes were the opposite of what they were used to. They saw these youth programmes as independent spaces (outside of schools) to navigate their collective experiences. Gloria and David describe their experiences co-creating an inclusive space for African immigrant youth.

Gloria, a daughter of Burundi parents, talks about her experience building a space of trust and inclusion as a leader at Adonis Musati Project (AMP):

> *At AMP, it's more comfy than school, because it is a different space. AMP brings foreign nationals and South African citizens together. We talk about why foreigners come to South Africa [and] share our life experiences together. At AMP, we became quite close friends. When I went there, I was new. I met friends going through the same thing, people I could share my problems with, people I could trust.*[23]

David, born to Zimbabwean parents in South Africa, describes the camaraderie that was fostered in these spaces:

> *AMP is quite mixed. We're like one big family, where everyone knows each other. In AMP, it's like youth group therapy. It's a session where people share their stories and they are all like, "Eh, it was tough." We could connect.*[24]

After Gloria and David benefited from the experience, they returned to apply for leadership positions. As youth leaders, they played active roles in creating and maintaining these inclusive spaces by recruiting youth and facilitating sessions.

Laeticia describes her experience facilitating these inclusive spaces within AMP and the responsibility she felt over the students in her group.

> *I did three months of giving back to the kids. Every three months, we have a festival, a closing with the kids and the facilitators. Parents would ask, "What is it about? What time are they going to come back?" My pastor used to call me every Friday. I would tell my pastor, "He's coming right now". I feel for*

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[23] Excerpt from an interview with Gloria conducted on 16 February 2021 in Delft, Cape Town.

[24] Excerpt from an interview with David on 23 February 2021, in Wynberg, Cape Town.

> *them. If something happens, you're the one in trouble. I always had airtime on Fridays. It's not just one person. It's 15, 14 kids. I know if I get a phone call, it's one of the parents.*[25]

Laeticia describes her time facilitating as "giving back," employing terms of civic engagement and volunteerism. Her story demonstrates the responsibility she felt as a facilitator, as well as the emotional labour she put into the programme, to the extent that her responsibilities continued after the formal programming was over.

6.5 As a bridge

Organisations facilitate civic engagement by offering a structure for African immigrant youth to be able to act on issues that they care about. Higher education institutions were important bridges for students to gain access to programmes and platforms where they could engage meaningfully in civic participation. These included opportunities to engage in volunteer work and to develop civic values (Flanagan and Levine, 2010; Lopez and Kolaczkowski, 2003; Terriquez and Florian, 2013), especially as higher education is increasingly committed to a civic mission (Flanagan and Levine, 2010).

Youth associated with the University of Cape Town or the Uplearn programme were often engaged in volunteer opportunities facilitated by schools. Besides organised volunteering, higher education also exposed students to community-based research and partnerships between universities and local community organisations.

Students of the Uplearn programme were expected to complete an internship in order to qualify for their Bachelor's Degree at Southern New Hampshire University. With the South African unemployment rate at around 30%, staff of the Uplearn team struggled to secure internships for their students. Eventually, they decided to target humanitarian and nonprofit organisations for internship placements, hoping they could feel empathy towards refugees and that the sector was keen for funding and staffing. As a result of Uplearn's efforts, many of the students interned for nonprofits in healthcare promotion, programme development and implementation. For some students, Uplearn provided a bridge to the type of civic engagement they had been seeking.

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[25] Excerpt from an interview with Laeticia conducted on 10 February 2021 in Gugulethu, Cape Town.

Marie, a student at Uplearn born to Congolese parents, describes her experience leveraging educational programmes (from high school to university) for civic engagement. Marie's interest in civic engagement stems from her high school experience, where the Life Orientation module mandates that youth must volunteer for an organisation in the community for three days:

> *In high school, when I was in grade 9, I had a Life Orientation project where I went to a psychiatric hospital with disabled and mentally unstable people. I interviewed the social worker there and sat with the disabled people. In grade 10, I volunteered at the Aurora Rehabilitation Centre in Bloemfontein. It was also a Life Orientation project around drug addiction and how it starts. My siblings escorted me to the place to see and learn. We also trained kids in the community in skating, painting [and] drawing to keep kids off the street. We played games in a mini-classroom. At Uplearn, there was an internship posted on the Professional Development notice board (WhatsApp group). I always wanted to work for an organisation helping the vulnerable, youth [and] women, but I didn't know how to start. I did a project management internship for Ikhaya Le langa. It's a social entrepreneurship that gives back to the community in Langa. I love community work. I started with passion and fell in love with the organisation. I don't want it to just be the first time, but all the time. I want a proper job, to make it an everyday or every weekend thing. If there's a chance of me working at Ikhaya Le langa … I would love to provide for my life while helping others build their life.*[26]

Marie leveraged the relationships and opportunities offered by both her high school and the Uplearn programme to engage in the type of civic participation she wanted to do. Following her internship at Ikhaya Le Langa, Marie continued to volunteer at the organisation. She helped organise a street art competition and open house months after the formal completion of the internship. Her story reveals similar hopes to those of Carol and Rebecca, who describe their hopes of turning their volunteer work into full time careers. Marie's story also demonstrates how organisations are not responsible for immigrant youth civic engagement, but how they facilitate connections for immigrant youth to engage meaningfully in civic participation.

6.6 As a platform

Community organisations play an important role in acting as a platform for African immigrant youth. Xenophobia in South Africa is often underpinned by minimal interaction between local

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[26] Excerpt from an interview with Marie conducted on 26 March 2021 in Summer Greens, Cape Town.

South African and foreigners (Nyamnjoh, 2006), making it easier for politicians to scapegoat immigrants and refugees for social ills. Scalabrini's UNITE youth programme targets that discrepancy by facilitating interactions between local and immigrant youth, even as the program disproportionately caters to local South African youth. Through participatory activities such as dialogue, music and art, the program facilitates social interaction that is crucial to building and strengthening communal networks (Putnam, 1993; Forrest and Kearns, 2001). Although immigrant youth were a minority in the UNITE programme, immigrant youth who participated were given a platform with which to engage in discussions on xenophobia, race, identity and difference in a facilitated environment.

Kyle, an immigrant youth from Zimbabwe, had been a long-time leader within the programme, having been a part of the programme since its inception. Despite transferring to a high school where the programme did not run, Kyle continued to attend leadership meetings on Fridays at Scalabrini. While other youth were shuttled to Scalabrini from their schools, Kyle often made his own way to leadership meetings. As a leader in the programme, Kyle took it upon himself to comment and correct actions of other youth in the programme, reflecting the emphasis on individual actions in intimate, interpersonal spaces as outlined in Chapter 5. The final UNITE meeting I attended coincided with Freedom Day. Youth were given a platform to celebrate through food, dance and art. Several youth, Kyle included, appointed themselves the designers of the banner. They carefully outlined the design and instructed other youth on what to do, what to paint and in what colour. In this way, Kyle is able to engage in expressive and aesthetic techniques of civic participation by leveraging Scalabrini as a platform.[27]

African immigrant youth also leverage community organisations as platforms to negotiate social adulthood and citizenship. Peter, a son of Zimbabwean immigrants, was introduced to me by an organiser of the Imagining Otherwise participatory arts project organised by the Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education. Peter was the first youth I interviewed. We met at his house in Delft, where he has been staying for the past nine years. When I visited on a Friday morning, I sat on a brown couch across from Peter while his younger siblings and parents were at church. Joseph, one of Peter's best friends, was on Peter's computer trying to record a song in Shona.

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[27] Notes from participant-observation conducted with UNITE youth programme from March 12, 2021 to April 23, 2021.

Joseph told me about a song he had just posted on YouTube about his experience in South Africa. "My song is about the voice of the youth, how [adults] are trying to keep us quiet, in Shona," Joseph told me.[28]

Peter described how his involvement in this project gave him a platform to talk about issues going on in Zimbabwe.:

> Imagining Otherwise is a gathering of young people from different countries to tell the story, or background, of how they're living. I was given a bunch of small tasks. They told me to interview people in society about how they are living with the coronavirus. I *din't* know who to ask, so I asked my dad and mum then edited the videos. I also did a time machine short clip. Our assignment was to copy other major artists, those that were teaching about apartheid. That's how I came up with the Free Zimbabwe video. I actually *didn't* know I was putting a big message outside. I used clips of my grandparents living in the 80s [and] 90s. There were video clips of Mugabe [and] Zuma, and I decided to add myself into the video.

> *People are suffering in Zimbabwe. There's no food because bread became USD $3 when, under Mugabe, it was USD $1 for two. That day, I was sitting in the house and heard my dad complaining. [The same week], Francois gave me a task and, on the task, I needed to do something big. So, I told my grandmother's story. I took short clips and combined them. I used Charlie Chaplin clips where he acted as Hitler, edited it and put him inside [the video]. A couple of years back, in Zimbabwe, the stores were really empty. I had gone back to apply for my ID and passport, and my grandma started crying, saying things are so hard, so I was trying to send a message. [They told us to] copy a video, but do it in your own way. The situation in Zimbabwe is a stressful situation to be living with. It's hard when I hear my grandma struggling, but I can't do anything about it because I'm here. I release stress through editing videos. So when people ask me a question, I don't have to explain. They just see the message through the videos. I want to tell my grandparent's story.*[29]

Peter's story demonstrates how community organisations facilitate civic awareness among African immigrant youth. While some youth in this study had independently developed their own civic awareness, many of them cited the importance of inclusive spaces in facilitation. Research on youth civic participation reveals that young people are more likely to become civically engaged in settings (such as community organisations) where they are encouraged to participate in civic affairs (Stepick and Stepick, 2002). For African immigrant youth in this study, community organisations and youth programmes were spaces where they connected individual struggles to complex structural societal issues. These spaces offered youth a platform to speak on these issues both personally and publicly. Through Imagining Otherwise, Peter can unpack and portray his family's struggle within a wider commentary on society and politics in Zimbabwe. Young people, through their partnerships with community organisations, are then elevated to this status of expert citizens. Through these networks and connections, they are able to communicate strategically, "reforming and utilising individual and collective conduct to boost their own influence" (Bang, 2004: 165). Community organisations were spaces where youth developed a discursive strategic capacity. Youth involved with community organisations had greater access to networks. They were able to cooperate with community workers, administrators and the media.

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[28] Excerpt from participant-observation with Peter and Joseph on 5 February 2021 in Delft, Cape Town.

[29] Excerpt from an interview with Peter conducted on 5 February 2021 in Delft, Cape Town.

By leveraging the programme, Peter was given some legitimacy in the eyes of his family and community, staking his claims to citizenship and social adulthood. When his parents returned home from church, I met a tall man dressed in white Pentecostal attire and realised that he was Peter's father. He walked and spoke with a gravitas that could easily command a room and scare children into submission. Peter's father described the importance of supporting his children's dreams even as he, a mechanic, did not quite understand Peter's music and videography aspirations:

> *They think there are practical things to learn in life, but you must support your kids when they do things like singing. We're of a different generation, but we will support him.*[30]

Peter's father's story is interesting when placed alongside Peter's description of his father's reaction to his Free Zimbabwe video:

> *I showed my dad the video, and he said, "I'm not sure if you should show this video to them. It's kind of big, this video. I know it's a good message, it's a good intention, but maybe do something more light." It was my mother who said, "Let him send the video if that's what he wants to send. So [at Imagining Otherwise, when they asked why I did it], I said I just felt like doing it. I didn't*

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[30] Excerpt from an interview with Peter's father conducted on 5 February 2021 in Delft, Cape Town.

> *want to make any big statement. But when my dad asked what the video meant, I said I was trying to tell people the way I'm feeling about it.*[31]

Peter and his father's concerns support claims in the previous chapter about the stakes of civic engagement for immigrants. By stating different intentions to the staff at Imagining Otherwise and his family, Peter underscores some of the fears around forms of civic engagement that critique political leaders. Peter also leverages his involvement in the youth programmes in order to establish himself as a mature young person within his family. The movement from childhood to adulthood is not just a movement between stages of development, but also between positions of power, authority and social worth. By showing that he is engaged in issues that affect his family in Zimbabwe, Peter establishes himself as a young person whose decisions about his own future are trustworthy.

Besides social recognition, Peter, who was involved as a youth participant at the Adonis Musati Project, continued to have a professional relationship with the organisation, where he was paid to edit and produce videos. In this way, Peter leveraged the opportunities offered by community organisations to supplement his income and achieve some sort of economic citizenship in South African society. Much of the research on civic participation has only included volunteer acts or acts of unpaid labour. However, the intersectionality of class, race, gender and more in this study impacted the types of civic participation in which youth were involved. Peter describes his evolving relationship with the organisation:

> *Francois said, "I need you to finish school. Then, I'll give you a job to edit videos for money." I was editing videos, and they said they would pay me R500 for a day's work. After the first day, I couldn't finish, so I came back. Then the next day, I couldn't finish, so I came back. Finally, they agreed to pay me R2500 to finish the whole video, so I needed to do a proper job. This job can pay for tutoring. I shouldn't disappoint them. When I told my parents, they really appreciated it. It's a big thing for me.*[32]

Peter's story demonstrates how he leveraged relationships through his involvement in community organisations in order to make money for his family. His involvement in community organisations also allowed him to practice his self-taught skills and establish a portfolio that he could then able to use to generate more economic opportunities. Peter also worked with local recording artists to produce beats, make music and produce videos. Francois introduced Peter to some film people who were offering to pay him for beats. In the face of economic hardship and uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, Peter's ability to make money through video editing allowed him to secure some kind of livelihood for his family. In this way, Peter's father's support of his decisions around his career are an acknowledgement of Peter's contributions to his family and proof that his pursuit of art does, in fact, help the family financially.

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[31] Excerpt from an interview with Peter conducted on 5 February 2021 in Delft, Cape Town.

[32] Excerpt from an interview with Peter conducted on February 5, 2021 in Delft, Cape Town.

Durham (2000) claims that discourses of adulthood index other fields of meaning and power, as well as forms of recognition. Peter – whose dream to be a video producer and musician allowed him to be recognised as a financial contributor to his family – was met with support and acceptance. By demonstrating that his hopes and dreams have tangible benefits for his family, Peter makes a claim to social adulthood within his family.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, it is necessary to redefine civic participation for African immigrant youth. Within a landscape of xenophobia and structural limitations that result in an experience of waithood and exclusion for many African immigrant youth, it is important to look beyond narrow definitions. Besides including informal ways of volunteering (where immigrant youth leverage their social and cultural capital to forge convivial relationships with their neighbours and communities), it is important to recognise that civic participation can include both paid and unpaid activities.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at the ways in which youth leverage institutions (both higher education institutions and community organisations) to create inclusive spaces for African immigrant youth and, more importantly, as bridges and platforms for civic participation and social change. The chapter also looked at the ways in which African immigrant youth leverage institutions in order to stake their claims to social adulthood and citizenship in South Africa.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Why: Key questions

Against a backdrop of xenophobia, violence and exclusion, this dissertation has attempted to answer the question: how do African immigrant youth experience life and live as ‘citizens ’in Cape Town? Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that, in the face of socio-economic and political marginalisation, African immigrant youth are engaging in civic participation. They contribute to the communities in which they live in by ‘giving back’ or performing ‘acts of kindness.’ Civic participation through community engagement allows African immigrant youth to dream and access citizenship, becoming a part of society where they are recognised as contributing members.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the problem statement and key research question. I outlined why an anthropological approach was necessary to capture the experiences of immigrant youth in Cape Town, because legal definitions of citizenship and immigration in South Africa do not necessarily reflect the lived experiences of immigrant youth. For youth born to non-South African parents – even those who have spent most of their lives in the country – their legal status continues to reflect a more temporary status, despite their long term residency in South Africa. Anthropological approaches to citizenship are broader than those defined by the state, particularly in a country where questions around citizenship are contested. Anthropology – which embraces the fluidity and multiplicity of concepts like immigration, youth and citizenship – is particularly suited to capture the experiences of immigrant youth who might otherwise have been excluded from other forms of research, where their participation is dependent on state-granted ‘citizenship ’or age categories. By providing pertinent historical context about xenophobia in South Africa and the tension between refugees and the Cape Town City Court, I argue for the importance of an investigation of immigrant youth and civic engagement in Cape Town.

In Chapter 2, I addressed the different theoretical frameworks that informed this ethnographic study around citizenship, social adulthood, dreams and the social imagination. Citizenship, as one of the most contentious issues in both academic and political circles, has seen a paradigm shift from a rights-based discourse to an obligations-based one, focusing on citizenship participation (Lawson, 2001; Lister, 1998). Such participatory notions of citizenship are pertinent on the African continent, where conceptions of citizenship are social and relational (Nyamnjoh, 2018: 57). African immigrant youth in this study reinforced relationships of responsibility and reciprocity in citizenship. By engaging civically in localised, relational and informal ways, youth also challenged citizenship as it is defined solely by the state. By unpacking theoretical frameworks around civic participation, I argued for the need to look beyond formal citizenship. While civic engagement has traditionally been measured by actions such as voting (Kellstedt, 1974; Uhlaner, Cain and Kiewiet, 1989) or identifying with political parties (Lamare, 1982), these activities coincide with decreased youth political participation (Harris et al., 2010). However, youth all over the continent envision and advocate for social change in new ways (Honwana, 2012), reinforcing the need to adopt broad perspectives on civic participation (Flanagan and Faaison, 2001). I outlined how citizenship and social adulthood are intertwined in this study, especially in Cape Town, where young people are often the scapegoats of discourses that paint them as inadequate citizens (Harris, 2011) or a “lost generation” (Cruise O’Brien, 1996). Markers of citizenship and social adulthood overlap for youth who are striving to participate in the collective and to be independent from others for social access or subsistence (Swartz, 2010). In emphasising the anthropological approach to youth or adulthood – as defined not by age but by indexical category – I located this research within debates on youth research, particularly those that embrace multidirectional, fluid and contextual approaches which allow for varied personal trajectories (Chisholm, 1999). I explained how this research pays attention to youth agency and the external forces that shape them (Furlong, 2000). Finally, I outline the importance of dreams and aspirations in this study, particularly with regards to an understanding of youth agency that is informed by the past and oriented to the future (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated how youth decisions and dreams are intertwined and shaped by the social worlds in which they live (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007). In late adolescence and young adulthood, young people are “both social navigators of the present and social generators of individual and collective futures” (Christiansen et al., 2005: 21), crucial to discussions on citizenship and social adulthood.

7.2 How: Doing the research

In Chapter 3, I detailed the framework of my methodology, how my methodology applies to my research, and the different challenges of doing anthropology *across* rather than anthropology from the top or from below, and the extent to which I was successful or unsuccessful. I began by reflecting on the why and how of immigrant youth research, recognising the potential pitfalls or complexities involved in this research. I argued for the importance of ethnography in understanding how youth actions and imaginings intersect (Meloni et al., 2015), in capturing a broad interpretation of participation (Smith et al., 2005: 441) and in the use of the body as an instrument of data collection. As a Southeast Asian woman doing research on African immigrant youth in Cape Town, I reflected on the impact of my positionality in relation to the various research participants. I argued that, in order to create an environment in which youth would feel safe and willing to talk about their cultural identities and histories, it was important for me to share my own cultural identities, practices and life experiences. In these encounters, we shared our different sensibilities and embodied experiences. The product of fieldwork discussed youth experiences as well as the dialogical process of fieldwork, of which I was an inescapable part. Reflecting on my own positionality involved difficult confrontations with my own privileged relationship to migration and how the history of migration in Cape Town continued to frame differential treatment between myself and youth participants based on physical appearance or perceptions of 'Otherness.' I discussed some of the sexual and racial harassment I experienced during fieldwork and the impact that had on connections between myself and youth participants. Drawing on four months of fieldwork, I outlined how I chose the various entry points into this ethnographic study and the difficult process of gaining access to the field sites or networked communities. As a former youth worker, I recognised the unique experience I had interacting with other youth workers who were often the gatekeepers to immigrant youth. Contrary to other researchers who have found themselves with nothing to do, I was thrust into the role of a facilitator. In the chapter, I described in detail the Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, a physical location to which I returned to multiple times during my research and the people and programmes that constitute Scalabrini. I described my first encounters with youth and their initial reactions to me, particularly in the UNITE youth programme. I also outlined how each entry point led me to different networked communities. This allowed me to conduct an ethnography of youth rather than an ethnography of an organisation while ensuring that interviews and fieldwork were in line with COVID-19 protocols. My research timeline mirrored the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in February 2021. Finally, I outlined my data collection process and my approach to interviewing. As part of a social constructivist approach, I asked general questions so that participants could determine how and what they shared, listening carefully to what people did and said in their life settings (Creswell, 2007).

7.3 What: Research findings

Chapters 4–6 dove directly into the data gathered over the four months of fieldwork. In Chapter 4, I described how immigrant youth in Cape Town engage in civic participation in the face of xenophobia, violence and prolonged waithood. Through Laeticia and Gloria's narratives, I revealed the lived experiences of African immigrant youth in Cape Town with regards to xenophobia, violence and waithood. To shift away from narratives that have focused on suffering, violence and poverty, their accounts explicitly address the agentive ways in which youth take charge of their future. This chapter argued that, within a context of hardship, hope and dreams have "survival value" (Davies, 2005) as powerful coping mechanisms. Dreams that encompass hopes, goals and aspirations can be "motivationally powerful" (Markus and Nurius, 1987) in the face of struggle and deprivation. For many African immigrant youth, dreams and aspirations are not luxuries; they are key to daily existence. While their struggles might be experienced on a day to day basis, the future is something they both actively look forward to and work towards. Laeticia and Gloria demonstrate that, in the midst of xenophobia, violence and waithood, they are not sitting back and waiting for things to happen. Their hopes and dreams are framed by a desire to improve or alleviate the precarious circumstances that they see around them. This chapter also outlined the importance of drawing from the past and projecting onto the future. By looking at motivations for African immigrant youth to participate in civic engagement, we saw how present actions were shaped by history (Fuh, 2012) and intertwined with aspirations (Appadurai, 2004) for the future. In the narratives of Victoria and Marie, we saw how African immigrant youth carried the dreams, aspirations and expectations of their families. The past – attributed to their family history, cultural background or the actions of family members – featured prominently in their everyday actions and future imaginings. Finally, through Anthony's narrative, we saw how youth are trying to be the change they want to see in the world. Anthony's experiences of discrimination, violence and exclusion informed his desire to drive community change, encompassing a view of South Africa that immigrant youth want to be a part of building. In this chapter, we saw African immigrant youth attempting to write themselves into the ‘New South African ’narrative by constructing their own sense of agency and belonging within a wider context of exclusion and marginality.

My arguments about the importance of hopes, dreams and aspiration as African immigrant youth draw from the past and project onto the future led to a discussion of the ways in which African immigrant youth engage in civic participation in Chapter 5. This chapter outlined the three main ways in which youth in this study engaged in civic participation: through individual behaviours, in informal, intimate spaces and/or through expressive and aesthetic techniques. Civic participation is often unable to take on an ‘activist’ character, as many immigrants were legitimately afraid to jeopardise their immigration status. As a result, young people’s practices of civic participation take the form of “small politics” (Marsh et al., 2003a; Marsh et al., 2003b; Norris, 2004; Norris et al., 2004). Small politics, characterised by their informal, individualised and everyday nature, are increasingly “personal and self-reflexive” (Bang, 2004: 163). Carol and Peter changed their individual behaviours in order to serve as role models in their communities. Thus, we saw the ways in which African immigrant youth attribute individual behaviours to larger social and political issues, employing personal strategies of civic participation to create social change. Peter’s conscious decision to resist gangsterism points towards the risks associated with public, formal types of volunteerism that are not always feasible for youth in this study. Rebecca and Laeticia’s narratives pointed to the importance of civic engagement in informal, intimate spaces. Being part of an immigrant family with distant relatives too far away, Laeticia highlighted how her neighbours in Gugulethu constituted her wider community in South Africa. Her decision to engage in small acts of civic participation – addressing community well-being in mutually-beneficial, convivial ways – allowed Laeticia and her family to attain social visibility within their community (Nyamnjoh, 2018). Samuel, a self-declared "keyboard warrior,” pointed to the importance of Internet spaces as realms of civic participation where personal risks are minimised. Finally, Cindy, David and Anna highlighted the importance of aesthetic and expressive techniques of civic participation. Building on the importance of the past and the future outlined in Chapter 4, Cindy’s narrative highlighted the role of writing in healing from intergenerational traumas, as well as writing as a means of visualising a different future. Cindy, David and Anna wove their personal stories as victims of xenophobia, crime, domestic violence and/or assault into larger narratives. They framed their own stories vis-à-vis stories categorised by the state. By performing, youth publicly disclosed the oppression and injustice that immigrants in South Africa face while maintaining a degree of anonymity. Combining their lived experiences with fictional stories, they actively critiqued the society that allows these acts of violence to occur. Through these various types of civic participation, we saw how African immigrant youth are developing a "new biography of citizenship," characterised by "dynamic identities, open, weak-tie relationships and more fluid, short-lived commitments" (Vinken, 2005: 155) in various types of associations.

Building on arguments from Chapters 4 and 5, Chapter 6 looked at the ways in which African immigrant youth leverage institutions to amplify their impact, to create inclusive spaces and to build bridges and platforms for social change. African immigrant youth consciously leveraged community organisations in order to attain social adulthood and economic citizenship through access to employment. However, Rebecca and Carol revealed that recognition as a contributing member of their community was more important than having a job in itself. Youth recognised that organisations offered them a platform where they were recognised as contributing community members, even as they continued to struggle with access to jobs and independence in other avenues of their life. Carol and Rebecca were both employed in steady jobs but continued to engage in civic participation (as a personal development facilitator and teacher respectively) for the opportunity to embody their hopes and dreams. Youth also leveraged institutions (both higher education and community organisations) to build their own inclusive spaces amid wider exclusion. By creating these inclusive spaces in exclusive places, they succeed in realising a form of participatory citizenship that they are denied through documentation. African immigrant youth also leveraged institutions as bridges to engage in the type of civic participation they wanted to do. Marie shared similar hopes to those of Carol and Rebecca for turning volunteer work into full time careers. Their stories proved that organisations are not responsible for immigrant youth civic engagement; rather, they facilitate connections for immigrant youth to engage meaningfully in civic participation. Finally, institutions offered a platform for youth to amplify their impact and provide additional recognition and legitimacy. Within the UNITE Youth programme, immigrant youth were given a platform to engage in discussions on xenophobia, race, identity and difference in a facilitated environment. Kyle, an immigrant youth in the programme, was able to leverage Scalabrini as a platform for personal leadership and as a wider platform for civic participation. Peter also leveraged a community organisation as a platform to negotiate social adulthood and citizenship. Through his involvement in a participatory arts process, Peter demonstrated how community organisations facilitated civic awareness. His involvement in this programme also changed his relationship to social adulthood and livelihood within his family. By engaging in issues that affect his family in Zimbabwe and leveraging relationships in order to support his family financially, Peter established himself as a young person whose decisions about his own future were trustworthy. Through their narratives, I have argued that African immigrant youth are able to leverage institutions to stake their claims to social adulthood and citizenship in South Africa.

7.4 Concluding comments

In this research, I have discussed the ways in which African immigrant youth respond to violence, xenophobia and waithood by engaging in civic participation. They contribute to the communities in which they live in by ‘giving back’ or performing ‘acts of kindness’ to renovate and improve their community. This dissertation has demonstrated that dreams, aspirations (Appadurai, 2004) and people’s notions of themselves are interconnected and can become driving forces for civic participation. Youth are actively deciding to be the change they want to see in the world, looking backwards and forwards to determine their civic engagement in the present. The study found that youth engage in civic participation through their individual actions, by engaging in informal or localised settings (including helping family members or neighbours), or by making use of Internet spaces to speak on social issues in safe environments. Youth also used expressive or aesthetic techniques of civic participation. By engaging civically in relational and reciprocal ways, African immigrant youth also question the ability of citizenship to be defined solely by the state. Immigrant youth leveraged educational institutions or community organisations to amplify their impact, to create inclusive spaces and to build bridges and platforms for social change, while strengthening their ability to attain stable livelihoods. Overall, the research demonstrates that civic participation through community engagement allows African immigrant youth to dream and access citizenship, becoming a part of a society where they are recognised as contributing members.