

Keeping strong

Digital technology, participatory research, and young people's wellbeing amongst Alice Springs Town Camp communities

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Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre

The Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre is an Australian-based, international research centre that unites young people with researchers, practitioners, innovators and policy-makers from over 70 partner organisations. Together, we explore the role of technology in young people's lives, and how it can be used to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 12 to 25. The Young and Well CRC is established under the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres Program.

youngandwellcrc.org.au

Tangentyere Council

Tangentyere Council is the major service delivery agency for the 18 Housing Associations known as 'Town Camps' in Alice Springs. Tangentyere Council began operating in the early 1970s and was first incorporated in 1979. Provision of services by Tangentyere Council, often in partnership with government and other non-government organisations, means that Town Camps residents have access to services which they would otherwise miss out on. Town Camp residents have been tenacious in their determination to stay on their own place. However, the right to control their own lives is still one which Town Campers must constantly assert.

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1 Executive summary

Keeping Strong through Mobiles: Strengths-based approaches to social and emotional health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people using mobile technology ('Keeping Strong') is a project being run by Western Sydney University researchers in partnership with Aboriginal organisations and communities in Alice Springs and Western Sydney. The project broadly asks the question 'what is the role of digital technology in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons' wellbeing?' in two different contexts, and in answering that question, is concerned with research practices and processes that also help keep communities strong. *Keeping Strong* is therefore positioned at the intersection of three primary concerns and their related literatures and bodies of practice: participatory and culturally-strengthening research; digital technologies; and, the wellbeing of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals.

This report presents reflections on the research process, relationships and findings in the Alice Springs context. The report was co-authored by researchers within Western Sydney University and Tangentyere Council, using a voice that moves between multiple and shared, in acknowledgement of and parallel with the movements throughout the research process, between shared and disparate understandings. These discrepancies in understanding were the result of multiple factors, including a restructure at Tangentyere in response to changes in federal funding, which delayed the project such that it took place along a highly compressed timeline in the face of a looming deadline.

The initial project aimed to work with older teenagers to get a sense of their digital literacy, expand this perhaps through the development of new apps, and hopefully build future generations of researchers at Tangentyere, which employs and supports Town Camp residents as researchers. The restructure and consequent time pressures meant a shift of focus to younger Camp residents, and in line with a newly-created Division with Tangentyere.

Consequently, the combined team agreed that to start the work, Tangentyere would undertake an iPad-based survey of young Alice Springs Town Camp residents to engage them in the research process and to trial the use of mobile technology in research, thereby also diversifying the research skills of Tangentyere staff. A topic of interest to Tangentyere was selected for this trial: experiences of school and of Tangentyere Council's Youth Program. The resultant survey data is briefly discussed here, but is not the primary data of the research. The combined team then planned and ran a series of workshops in Alice Springs to build on the survey data and process through experimentation with activities that enabled the young Camp residents to engage in a diverse range of hands-on techniques for articulating and representing stories about school and Youth Program.

The reflection of the overall process, relationships, and activities including the workshops, form the primary data of this work, and hence the bulk of the content of this report. This is in line with literature and practice focused in intercultural spaces and in particular in work with and by First Peoples, which highlights the interplay between diverse forms of knowledge, and the negotiation of appropriate practice, as of central importance. The work was messy, unpredictable, and at times bewildering. Yet, all involved saw value, strength, and potential in it. This report is a point-in-time reflection from a multi-party team still involved in processing and discussing its activities and thoughts, and which intends to take this work and relationship further. This desire to take the work further attests to the value of research undertaken *with* community partners, rather than *on* or *about*, as it signals that even though

the process was complex and on one level the outcomes unclear, the project generated a framework and space that all partners want to develop further.

2 Introduction

This project report documents work undertaken in Alice Springs as part of the larger project coordinated by researchers at Western Sydney University ('the University'), called *Keeping Strong through Mobiles: Strengths-based approaches to social and emotional health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people using mobile technology* ('Keeping Strong'). *Keeping Strong* is positioned at the intersection of three primary concerns and their related literatures and bodies of practice: participatory and culturally-strengthening research; digital technologies; and, the wellbeing of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals. From this position, the project explored what it meant to ask 'what is the role of digital technology in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons' wellbeing?' in two different contexts – Western Sydney in New South Wales, and Alice Springs in the Northern Territory.

In asking that question, the University research team partnered with an Aboriginal organisation in each jurisdiction. An established body of research and literature documents the importance of the involvement of First Peoples, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in the identification, construction, execution, analysis, and presentation of the issues, tasks, and data comprising research amongst their communities. Smith's (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* remains a pivotal text articulating core issues regarding the history of research 'about' or 'on' First Peoples, rather than 'with' or 'by'.

Hence, the project was concerned with not only the research question at hand, but also with the way in which the question was asked – that is, how partners engaged, how the research process evolved in response to that engagement, and indicative findings that consequently emerged as diverse knowledge practices were brought to bear on the question. The research question in itself was therefore a lens through which to interrogate the broader issue of collaborative research between a University and Aboriginal organisations or communities. This echoes literature and practice that argue that in this context, the research process and relationships are as important as the 'data' generated (e.g., Iseke and Moore 2011). By placing relationships at the centre of the research process, the process itself became data, in addition to the community information being gathered through survey and other means, and all as objects for observation and reflection in undertaking the research.

One of the research partners—the Tangentyere Council Research Hub ('the Hub') in Alice Springs—was established as a way to enable Aboriginal community ownership of research processes and outcomes, and as an avenue for strengthening individuals, community, and culture (Foster et al, 2006; Sherwood 2010). In that context, this project and its approach emerged from shared interest and an established relationship between the University and the Hub. This report reflects on the research process and methods in partnership with Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs.

Keeping Strong in Alice Springs was undertaken through a partnership between the Hub, the Tangentyere Access to Education Department ('A2E'), and the University. *Keeping Strong* sought to understand how young Aboriginal people residing in Alice Springs Town Camps currently, and might, use digital tools and technology to enhance their wellbeing. For the purposes of the project, the team focused on how young people accessed the education

system and youth development programs offered by Tangentyere to provide the raw material for exploring the role that digital tools and technology might play in young people's lives. *Keeping Strong* employed an iterative methodology that sought to engage the research partners and young people in action. In addition, it sought to explore what 'good' research practice and relationships in this space meant for the teams involved.

This report outlines the research process, findings, lessons, and implications. It report combines the voices of researchers from the Hub, A2E, and the University. The report was drafted in light of several discussions amongst various constellations of the research teams that occurred before, during, and after the fieldwork. The Hub and A2E performed the bulk of the draft in the first instance, with input and editing from the University team followed by review and refinement by the Hub, and final review by an external reviewer.

3 Background

3.1 CONTEXT

Early in 2015 the Coordinator of the Hub and a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at the University discussed the possibility of a project partnership that looked into the wellbeing of young people living in Alice Springs Town Camps. The senior research fellow had worked with the Hub previously, principally in the area of housing, and as such knew the Tangentyere researchers, the Town Camp context, and how to undertake collaborative research appropriately in this space.

The opportunity to conduct such a project arose from the University's involvement in the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, founded to support young people to feel safe, healthy and resilient through the use of technology in a digitally connected world. The Town Camps of Alice Springs are home to many young people, and many are using digital technologies in their day to day lives; however, Tangentyere's sense is that not much is known about these young people's digital literacy and access, which impacts on the ability of Tangentyere to engage strongly in this space.

While anecdotally there are many stories about how digital tools and technology are creating issues for young people (such as cyber bullying through Facebook and so on) there has not been a great deal of investment in research and/or programs in the Town Camp context to document these concerns. Clearly the digital landscape, including sub domains such as social media, produces both opportunities and threats to users, neither of which is well understood in this context. The specific focus here was to explore how young people are using and accessing digital technology, given that both the digital landscape and socio-cultural issues in Alice Springs Town Camps may be different from those experienced elsewhere. *Keeping Strong* therefore aimed to build upon the capacity of young people to use digital technology, enhance wellbeing, and explore the strengths and challenges of school engagement and youth development; particularly through finding ways to tell their unique stories using digital technologies.

The project was also viewed as an opportunity to explore how the Hub could build partnerships with other programs and divisions within Tangentyere Council itself, in order to promote research in other Divisions of Tangentyere to add value to their processes, structures, and policies. Tangentyere is increasingly interested in finding ways to use the research capacity offered by the Hub to document, understand, monitor, and evaluate other

programs. The longer-term strategy of the Hub is to continue to develop Aboriginal owned research that improves (a) the quality of feedback to funding bodies about Tangentyere programs and their outcomes, and (b) the programs themselves through iterative participant focused research processes.

The project was seen as a way to support both succession planning and the development of new research skills at the Hub, through involving young Camp residents in research, and using digital technology in research. Moreover, it was seen as a way to strengthen and deepen the relationship between the Hub and the University, and to focus on ideas of appropriate research and working well together as informed by theories of community-based participatory research and of First Peoples' research objectives.

3.2 WHAT ARE TOWN CAMPS?

The term Town Camp will be familiar to most people who have lived or worked in regional Australia. Town Camps are Aboriginal settlements that were established when 'white' towns were formed. Alice Springs' Town Camp residents today are the descendants of Aboriginal people either from the direct area in which the town of Alice was established, or from areas further away who had their ability to live traditional lifestyles affected by pastoralists, government, or mission intervention. In Alice Springs there are currently 18 Town Camps. Some of these camps are as old as Alice Springs itself.

Aboriginal people living in Town Camps in Alice Springs fought hard to develop the Camps into fully fledged living areas with housing, sanitation and other infrastructure, in the face of active resistance from governments. The people of a number of Alice Springs Town Camps formed an umbrella organisation, which came to be known as Tangentyere Council in the 1970s. The Council came into being making the case for secure land tenure for Town Camps, and fighting for infrastructure, including housing and water. As it evolved it also managed housing and municipal services. This process was highly political and controversial, and its success is something that many people from Town Camps are rightly proud of.

The Town Camps have an almost exclusively Aboriginal population that varies greatly in language groups and kinships, and are now under different land tenure arrangements to the rest of the Alice Springs region. Today Tangentyere still supports 17 Alice Springs Town Camps, providing a wide range of services including construction, research, employment, aged care, family services, financial counselling, and tenancy support.

3.3 THE TANGENTYERE COUNCIL RESEARCH HUB

The Tangentyere Council Research Hub was established in 2002 to enable Tangentyere Council to meaningfully participate in the review of Alice Springs's first liquor control trials. As it developed it came to articulate two core philosophies: "researching ourselves back to life" and "no survey without service".

The Hub was designed specifically from the recognition of Aboriginal knowledge and expertise as fundamental to the process of social research in Aboriginal communities. This is knowledge and expertise the Hub engenders, through the involvement of local Aboriginal researchers in all research projects undertaken. The Hub team believes that local cultural expertise is paramount to delivering quality research outcomes.

The aims of the Hub are to:

- provide and develop Aboriginal expertise in areas of research and social services development;
- protect Aboriginal peoples' rights in relation to research;
- promote and conduct research that is meaningful and results in practical outcomes;
- give Aboriginal people ownership in research; and,
- use research to inform service delivery and social policy development.

Aboriginal researchers design, conduct, collate, and interpret findings, and contribute to writing the final research reports. The Hub works with its research partners, sharing information and expertise. Both the Tangentyere Research Hub's inception and its predominant research evaluation methodology is not merely culturally appropriate or sensitive – it is driven by and inexplicably linked with Aboriginal peoples' way of life, and often conducted through conversations with Elders. In this way, the form of research stays true to traditional methods of oral storytelling in both education and generative knowledge, and in line with the Hub's motto.

Above all, we value three main things: our relationships with our Elders, and how our work can strengthen our old people and their position as the knowledge authorities in our communities; our relationships with people in the Town Camps; and making sure we connect our work up with the past (Campbell, Foster & Davis, 2014, p. 151).

3.4 THE TANGENTYERE ACCESS TO EDUCATION (A2E) DIVISION

Access to Education (A2E) is a Tangentyere Council Division formed as part of a restructure that occurred in November 2015, which centralised many of the existing child, youth-centred, and family focussed programs. These programs operate preventative, crisis-intervention *and* restorative approaches, in a holistic and comprehensive strategy to respond to both group and individual needs at any of those stages systematically, using community development as the vehicle. A2E has three core programs:

- Youth and School Engagement, which operates Youth Development programs, a Parental Engagement Program (PEP), and Drum Atweme – a youth drumming social enterprise;
- Safe House which provides an 'Out of Home Care' emergency response residential facility for children; and,
- Ketyeye, an Integrated Case Specialist Team that services all Town Camps, delivering plans and initiatives that are not only locally relevant and meaningful, but also gender-balanced for cultural appropriateness.

The Youth and School Engagement Team engages with most Town Camps, including running four Community Centre engagement programs based in Larapinta, Hidden Valley, Karnte, and Trucking Yards Town Camps. In addition it runs a mobile outreach service in the Northern Camps region. The Youth and School Engagement program was the focus of the Keeping Strong Project.

A2E has an overarching emphasis on self-directed support for individuals and families in education, safety and wellbeing. A2E focuses on community-identified priority areas including domestic violence, AOD/VSM (Alcohol & Other Drugs/Volatile Substance Misuse), supporting families in getting kids to school, youth diversion and development, residential

care, and family-centred case management. A2E works in a range of partnerships with internal and external programs and agencies, to maximise the potential of the Division's trajectory. The A2E'S partnership with the Hub and the University in *Keeping Strong* was made through the Youth and School Engagement team, consisting of the Coordinator and five Youth Workers.

3.5 WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

The University previously partnered with Tangentyere on research into appropriate housing options for Town Camp residents, focusing on residents' experiences of housing in the past and present, and their aspirations for the future (see Crabtree et. al., 2015). Through its primary data capture, that work provided a channel for community knowledge and objectives regarding housing changes under the suite of policy changes known as the Intervention, as well as changes to local governance as enacted by the Northern Territory Government.

The work established a respectful research relationship between the two organisations, and which both were keen to develop further, particularly with regard to mutual learning and skills development. The University is committed to articulating appropriate principles, processes, and protocols for research in partnership with and/or undertaken by Aboriginal communities, individuals, and organisations. The Young and Well team brought to the table skills in working in innovative ways to explore the actual and potential roles of digital technology in young persons' wellbeing, including through iterative processes drawing on a range of multi-media and/or digital methods and technologies. The University team brought together individuals with a range of experience and skills, and was strategically developed in response to the ongoing discussions with the Hub over the course of the project, as will be discussed further below.

4 Origins of the Project

The formation of the project began with conversations between the University and the Hub, with the idea that the University team would work with staff from the Hub to design and implement a project that would work with young people from the Town Camps around digital storytelling. It was also conceived the Hub would use a collaborative approach by seeking out other Council Divisions within Tangentyere, to identify a cohort of young people interested in sharing stories and personal journeys using (probably) smart phones and iPads as the medium.

The rationale for the project was the confluence of a number of separate but related threads around the work of the Hub. Firstly, the Hub employs only three full time staff, which inherently limits the capacity of the scope of works. Secondly, the Aboriginal staff at the Hub are female, which culturally constrains some aspects of effectively reaching all groups within the town camp population. Thirdly, and most significantly, the Hub's employees are all middle aged, and subsequently experience some challenges in accessing certain groups in Town Camps, such as young people. These characteristics are mentioned, to highlight the Hub's discourse in seeking alternative ways to connect with varying groups and their subsequent needs, rather than to infer areas of research that Hub *can't* do per se.

The project therefore was an opportunity to explore how the Hub could expand its suite of options in terms of getting information and participation from Town Camp residents, focusing in this particular case on young people. As previously mentioned, the Hub aims to

continuously broaden the scope of work with a diverse range of people and groups in Town Camps, and *Keeping Strong* provided an opportunity to do so. The project also sought to utilise innovative digital technologies to both provide the opportunity to young Aboriginal people to tell share their stories, and additionally generate qualitative data to bolster the programs designed to support them, as the long-term strategy.

The A2E team felt *Keeping Strong* had real potential as the Division holds Children's and Youth Development in Central Australia at its core. There is a clear need to develop relevant evidence in this field, highlighting the importance of the aim for the short-term project to add to the long-term goals of determining levels of youth engagement, the value of youth-focused services from a youth perspective, and hearing about the benefits and barriers to accessing services from young people. If successful the Division has the capacity to use the evidenced-based theory gleaned from the data to secure sustainable and long-term funding for youth objectives, social justice and equitable opportunities for young Aboriginal Australians.

5 Methodology

The project broadly had three major stages, with sub-elements within those stages: planning; initial data collection; and, workshops. The team will also engage in further internal discussion subsequent to this report, focusing on the implications of this project for future planning and potential further projects. The Hub's overarching methodology can be described by the diagram in Figure 1 (noting that this was developed for a piece on evaluation, so here substitute 'external researcher' for 'evaluator').

In this instance, as with the previous work with Tangentyere, the University team did not have a predetermined program evaluation in mind. Rather, discussions emerged based on an opportunity the University had to undertake research into young people's wellbeing and digital technology. As with the previous research approach undertaken by the University and Tangentyere, discussions focused on whether there were any issues in this space that were of concern or interest to community and Tangentyere, the possibilities there might be to work collaboratively on such issues, and how best to undertake such work. In previous work, the University had worked with Tangentyere to meet with Tangentyere staff, community leaders, and then the Executive in securing endorsement for project work; in this instance, logistical issues meant it was more manageable for Tangentyere staff to seek project endorsement and liaise with the Executive and Elders.

5.1 PRE-PLANNING

Initial planning began when the Hub and the University began discussions about the project in 2015. The broad approach that was discussed was a project which would consist of two field visits by University staff to Alice Springs. The purpose of the first of these visits was to conduct meetings with relevant stakeholders, to frame the approach for the second visit (workshops), and to decide on what activities each of the teams would undertake to prepare for the workshops. Broadly, the workshops would look at the current and potential roles of digital technology in young Camp residents' wellbeing, and ways this could be strengthened and broadened across age groups, including through the diversification and development of the research practices at the Hub. Final determination and refinement of those topics and the ways in which they would be translated into a workshop framework were the intended points of discussion for the initial planned meetings.

After much discussion and some logistical challenges were resolved, it was decided that the first visit would occur in the week of the 8th of February 2016. In the interim, the first task for the Hub was to work out how it would approach a project that aimed to explore digital story telling with young people. As the Hub does not have any formal links with young people or organised youth groups the first task was to work out how to most effectively link with this group. Discussions were initiated with the Family and Youth Services Division in Tangentyere to explore how a research project might be able to: 1) link with young people; and, 2) offer something to the program in return for their involvement.

The Family and Youth Services Division were enthusiastic about the project; however, shortly after discussions commenced a restructure of the Division was initiated with a dramatic overhaul of positions and staff. This meant that no discussions of substance could take place until it was clear how the new Division (A2E) would be structured, including what programs it was offering and who would staff positions within those programs. This restructure was not finalised until late 2015; however, in-principle agreement to move forward with the project was agreed between the Hub coordinator and the A2E manager.

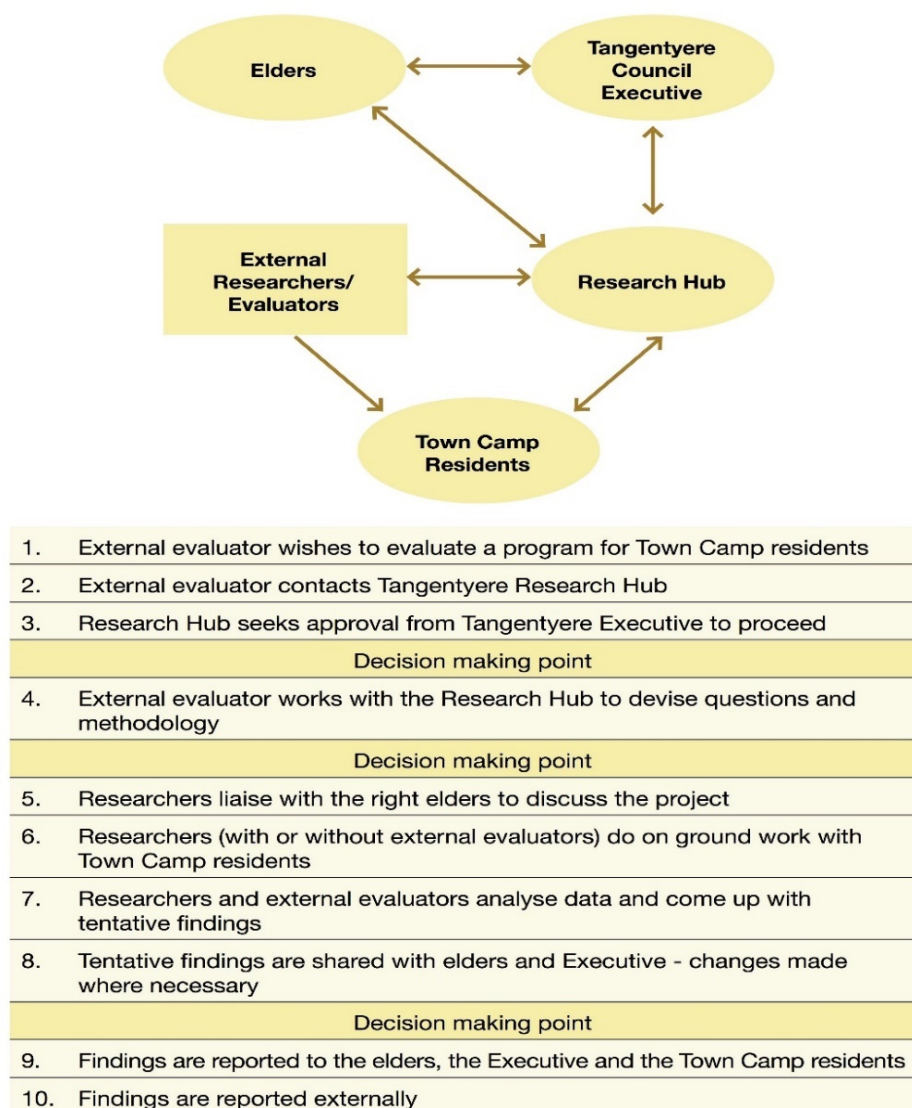


Figure 1. The Hub research methodology.

Source: Campbell, Foster & Davis (2014, p. 148). Note: Most Executive members and Elders are also Town Camp residents. The diagram is not intended to suggest absolute separation between the categories of residents, Executive, and Elders, but to illustrate a decision making and governance process.

Discussions were held and a series of emails exchanged between the Hub coordinator and the A2E manager prior to the University visit in February 2016. This established the basis for the project – namely, the use of digital devices to build research engagement. That is, such use is more than just helping people to tell their stories and build cultural strength and wellbeing through digital storytelling; it is also about building the ability of people to engage in community-building research work, enabling the Hub to diversify the ways it works and creating new ways for Aboriginal people and others to work together productively. Concurrently, the research would seek to help A2E to capture and understand how their work assists young people to stay strong and well through the use of digital technology. Critically, however, these initial discussions did not determine the shape or focus of the project. It was decided that this should be established in the planning workshop.

5.2 PLANNING WORKSHOP 1 (8, 9 FEBRUARY 2016)

Four University research staff visited Alice Springs in early February for the purposes of project planning. The first of two meetings were held at 3 Brown Street. The first part of this meeting was focused on introductions, which are considered an important aspect of respectful meetings by the Hub and University research teams. They give each person a chance to tell the others who they are, where they come from, their hopes and visions for the proposed project, and a chance to hear the perspectives of others.

Following these introductions, we discussed what each of the organisations wanted to get from the project. The discussion was unstructured and iterative, essentially focusing on how the Hub and the University could work with A2E to assist them to gain information about their programs through the agency of the project, with the view to improving them and bolstering their case for ongoing funding.

During the conversation, potential synergies emerged between the Hub's desire to recruit and train more Camp residents in research positions, and the A2E desire to keep young Camp residents safe, support their access to school, and build the Camp community centres into vibrant hubs. There was general agreement that 'generative research' was desirable – that is, research that strengthens and builds community knowledge, and the knowledge and relationships of the research team at large. There was also agreement that new and broader research techniques were worth exploration to draw more Camp residents into research, in dialogue with A2E's objectives, particularly with regard to what a 'good' program for supporting school participation might look like.

The second meeting built on the first, trying to define more clearly what the focus of the project should be. Unfortunately, due to other meetings at Nyewente (Trucking Yards) Town Camp, core Hub researchers were unable to attend. Ideas that were canvassed for framing the data collection and workshops included Kinship Care and Alcohol Management. It was agreed that the Tangentyere team would discuss the possibilities further and develop a scope of works accordingly, with workshops planned for mid-April and process reflection in May to meet the June project deadline.

5.3 INITIAL DATA COLLECTION

Following the workshop, the A2E Coordinator of Youth and School Engagement and a Hub community researcher, with input from the A2E manager and the Hub coordinator, worked together to develop a questionnaire for the purposes of collecting data from young people about their experiences of school and Tangentyere Youth Programs. This focus was chosen (rather than pursuing Kinship Care or Alcohol Management) because it was seen to more closely align to the major activity of A2E, and would build on foundational conversations and work done by the A2E manager and the Hub researchers in late 2015 around school engagement.

An initial area of concern was the lack of digital technology infrastructure. At this point in time, members of the Hub and A2E had access to mobile phones but nothing else, and the target cohort (which was younger than that originally envisaged by the project team) had very limited access to any digital devices. Fortunately, the University was able to supply Tangentyere with two iPads quite quickly, which were then equipped with Quick Tap survey apps. The A2E Youth and School Engagement Coordinator set up the purchasing and installation of the software, with some assistance from CAYLUS, who had existing know-how of some of the technical details.

The two iPads were set up with heavy duty cases to be robust in the Youth Program context, and loaded with the survey questions by A2E (see full questions and responses in Appendix A). Use of the Quick Tap Survey Online Administration site and the corresponding iPad apps was decided upon by staff from A2E and the Hub, who then surveyed young people attending Tangentyere after school and holiday Youth Programs. The data from this is detailed in the findings section. Over the brief and intense survey period, the Hub and University staff liaised about how best to recruit and involve participants, and to discuss potential workshop activities. One suggested activity was to write the survey questions and the available answers on large sheets of butcher's paper that were to be stuck on the walls, with the children then asked to place a coloured dot next to their response. This was seen as a way to visualise the survey process and make it tactile in a different way to the iPad interface. This was intended to provide another avenue for drawing the young Camp residents into research and into thinking about different ways of undertaking the same research task, and also to create a talking point for the children with regard to the responses of themselves and their collective peer group. Over the course of the three days, later days' attendees would also be able to see the previous days' responses. It was also floated that each day's cohort could be broken up into smaller groups working on a series of parallel tasks.

University team discussions during this time focused on building a team with a broad enough skill set and flexible enough work approach to be able to think creatively and responsively on the ground, as informed by the overarching framework of engaging young people in culturally-strengthening work through digital technology. The final team comprised: a television production graduate with expertise in teaching digital production techniques and working with young people regarding digital technology; a creative writer with expertise in facilitating story-telling; a linguist with growing experience in digital research including digital mapping; a cultural researcher with extensive expertise in the rights of children in the digital age and the role of digital technology in young people's wellbeing; and, a human geographer with experience in working with the Hub, developing appropriate research relationships with Aboriginal organisations, and community-based digital research. The team also commissioned short videos explaining the basics of design, particularly graphic design, in

case the team needed to explain graphic design in an engaging way if poster design emerged as a relevant activity during the week.

The University team were a bit daunted by the still-nebulous nature of the pending workshop week. There was a mix of enthusiasm and excitement at the prospect of working iteratively and testing how the team and their skills responded to the week, alongside a strong desire for the activities to be of interest and relevance to the young people, the Hub, and A2E, and trepidation about the possibility of that failing to be the case. While possibility unsettling, that mixture was felt to be the right balance of orientations to keeping the research process open and responsive, and the team alert to tracking the dual issues of whether the actual tasks were appropriate, and whether individuals and teams were comfortable and familiar with the nature of the work being undertaken.

5.4 WORKSHOPS (18-22 APRIL 2016)

The University staff returned to Alice Springs for the week of the 18th to the 22nd April, 2016. The basic format for the week was that a planning workshop would be conducted on Monday the 18th, setting out the plan for the workshops with young people. These were planned for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, running from 4:30pm to 6pm; with a degree of flexibility in time. A2E staff including the Youth and Engagement Program Coordinator and various Youth Workers would collect the young people and bring them to the Tangentyere A2E head office in Brown Street where there are various recreational facilities that the young people are familiar with, and return the youth home at the conclusion of the workshops. The workshops would provide food and drinks.

The University team members were the main facilitators of the workshop activities. However, the activities and content were developed with the collaboration of the Hub researcher who conducted the introductions to the workshop afternoons and ran the survey with young people, the A2E Youth and Engagement Program Coordinator, and various Youth Workers, who focused on behaviour management and the logistics throughout the workshops.

Follow-up sessions were held each day starting at 1:30pm, in which the overall team's sense of the previous day's workshop was discussed, and changes made for the subsequent workshop where necessary. The workshops were held with a different group of young people each day, seeking to cater for the widest group of young people, rather than seeking to work with one group more deeply. The workshop participants were from the following Camps:

- Tuesday – Trucking Yards and Morris Soak
- Wednesday – Northern camps including Warlpiri, Mt. Nancy, Palmers, Charles Creek and Hoppy's Camp
- Thursday – Larapinta and Hidden Valley

At the conclusion of the workshops a debriefing session was planned to discuss the week as a whole, and to capture insights and lessons for the future. Unfortunately Hub staff were unable to attend this session due to extenuating circumstances. Consequently, the debrief process occurred via a series of subsequent team meetings and phone conversations, which also generated the format for this report's writing process.

5.5 THIS REPORT

At the February workshop it was agreed that the teams would all keep track of their sense of the process over the course of the project, aiming for a joint process reflection in May in

preparation for the co-authorship of this report. While individual team-based conversations happened in May amongst Tangentyere and University staff, due to various logistical matters, the entire team was unable to jointly undertake the process reflection until early June, and not all Tangentyere team members could attend.

This report was consequently drafted firstly through a joint effort of the Tangentyere team. That draft was then added to by the University team based on their notes from the two workshop visits and the process reflection of early June, as well as individual and team reflections on the process, meetings, informal discussions, and activities. That draft was then sent back to Tangentyere and finalised once the team at large were satisfied with its form and content. External review of the final draft was also performed by an academic referee.

In places, this report reflects a shared voice and in others the voice of the Tangentyere team and of the University team are in dialogue. This diversity of voices and movement between shared and disparate voices reflects the writing process, and the broader research process in which some understandings were shared while others were not. In writing this report, the co-authorship and the voices it contains are an effort to respect and demonstrate the larger objectives of *Keeping Strong* with regard to collaborative, engaged, and reflective research.

6 Findings

6.1 PLANNING

The main finding from this phase was the difficulty in establishing a solid and shared understanding of the purpose of the project, from which particular strategies would emanate. The three way relationship that underpinned the project did not exist prior to the project. The core difficulty faced by all was the process of simultaneously trying to establish research relationships while conducting a project, although a core prior research relationship existed between the University team leader and the Hub community researchers. We did not see this issue of broader relationship development in advance, which was possibly compounded by some of the team already having a solid working relationship, and so not realising this was a potentially significant issue for other team members. The limited time available (see following paragraphs) meant that we could not meaningfully address the challenges that emerged.

These challenges were compounded by the structural changes that occurred to the Tangentyere's Family and Youth Services Division during the initial planning phases of the project. The result of this was that much of the pre-planning work that would have taken place within Tangentyere could not occur, pushing back the timeline for on-the-ground engagement with the University. This ultimately restricted the time available for the important negotiations that arguably needed to take place, to establish parameters and focus what was a complex three-way process.

The compressed timeline meant that it was challenging for the three groups (Hub, A2E and University) to establish a position in which it was clear how the project met their specific needs, and what each was responsible for. At the conclusion of the first set of meetings the consensus was that we would frame the initial data collection around either the issue of Kinship Care or Alcohol Management. Each of these proposed project areas already had some work done so there was existing data on which we could build.

After the meetings with the University, the Hub and A2E further discussed potential project foci within Tangentyere. This led the Hub and A2E to rethink their approach and, rather than

use existing data as the basis for the project, seek to do something directly of relevance to the day-to-day work of A2E Youth and School Engagement team, which revolves around the running of youth programs designed to support young people's educational engagement. Taking this as the new focus enabled work already undertaken between the A2E Manager and Hub staff to inform the initial data collection phase, and more directly focus on the experience of young people in the programs they were already involved in.

From the University's perspective, the changes in Tangentyere's focus meant the team was unable to articulate a deep methodology in response to a particular area of enquiry, as the area was rapidly shifting and running on an increasingly tight timeline. In response, the University team realigned its approach to assemble a team that would be flexible on the ground and able to develop processes and activities in response to an emergent research area and participant group. Despite the fluidity of the potential tasks, the team kept consistent its framing objectives of exploring the actual and potential roles of digital technology in young people's wellbeing through culturally-strengthening research, bearing in mind the broader issue of appropriate research practice and partnerships.

6.2 THE YOUTH ACCESS IPAD SURVEY RESULTS

Some aspects of the findings will be discussed here; however, all resulting data collected in the surveys can be found in *Appendix A: Youth Access iPad Survey Results in Graph Format*.

6.2.1 FINDINGS SUMMARY: CONTEXT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

How: Young people engaged in the initial Youth Access Survey through the iPads, installed with Quick Tap Survey Software and Apps. One of the Hub researchers conducted the majority of these surveys with young people, with the assistance of the A2E Youth and Engagement Coordinator.

Who: A total of 77 participants engaged in Youth Access iPad Surveys, which were conducted with a range of young people from all 18 Alice Springs Town Camps; both facilitators aimed to canvass as broad a region as possible within the time limitations. The findings show however, that 32.88% of youth engaging in the study were from the Larapinta Valley Town Camp, and 21.51% from Trucking Yards. Of all youth engaged in the surveys 64.38% were aged between 6 – 12 years old. Within this group 56.16% of youth identified as female, and 43.84% as male. These results highlight the predominant age group engaging in the Tangentyere Youth Programs, which is also reflected in the focus of funding contractual obligations. It also shows that the Youth Programs are engaging youth who identify as male and female relatively equally.

What: 13 questions in total were included in the Youth Access iPad Survey, which principally focused on issues related to access to both the Schools and the Youth Programs, likes and dislikes in this area, and demographic information.

Where: Surveys were conducted at various locations of Tangentyere Youth Program activities, the majority of which are facilitated in Alice Springs Town Camps, but also at the 3 Brown Street recreational facility, and some offsite areas such as the Easter 2016 School Holiday Program "Splash Party" at the Alice Springs Town Pool.

When: The iPad Survey phase to the data collection occurred throughout the months of March and April 2016, outside of school hours.

Challenges: It was soon found when facilitating the surveys, that some of the questions came across somewhat *blunt*. This was despite all efforts by the Hub and A2E researchers to ensure it was as appropriate and valid as possible, as well as simple in order to work within the project time frames. In preparing to conduct the survey Tangentyere staff had to navigate between quality and quantity, recognising that priority was being given to getting as many people involved in the first instance. This meant designing a simpler questionnaire that compromised the ability of respondents to provide deeper responses. Tangentyere staff defended the approach by arguing that young people would be offered the opportunity to tell deeper stories if they so wished in the second part of the project (workshops).

It was discussed that if further research in this area was made possible in the future, the nature of the data sought would be made more in-depth, personal, and qualitative as opposed to gathering a great deal more of statistical data. The limitation to the qualitative side of the research could have also have been impacted by the design of the survey; that is, by the use of the Quick Tap Survey software. There is the potential to explore different styles of surveys available through the software, if more time was available.

Potential impacts of dynamics in conducting surveys: It was noted by the team that some responses to the surveys could have been impacted by peer pressure when done in small groups. For example, in one case a young person we will call Sue, was answering the question of ‘how often they went to school’, and several others in the small group had already answered ‘they went all the time’. Though the friends in the group were all yelling out that Sue ‘never went to school ever’, she answered in the survey she went ‘most of the time’. It was unethical and inappropriate pressure at the time to ask the young person if they were telling the truth. Sue was reminded however, that whatever the truth is, was okay. There was also the possibility that some responses made by young people could have been what they believed to be the *right* answer, as opposed to how they think and feel; potentially skewing some of the data, but this is speculative.

6.2.2 FINDINGS SUMMARY: YOUTH RESPONSES TO ENGAGEMENT IN TANGENTYERE YOUTH PROGRAMS

As outlined in Appendix A, there are a number of interesting responses to what young people enjoy about engaging in the Tangentyere Youth Programs. As displayed below, young people particularly value ‘fun’, ‘friends’ and ‘sport’ made possible at the youth programs, followed closely by ‘play’, ‘food’, and ‘family’ involvement in the activities.

A combined 78% of youth engage in the Tangentyere youth programs *all of the time* (24.66%), *sometimes* (38.36%), or *most of the time* (15.7%), indicating a high level of engagement. The engagement levels also appear to be introjected with youth values, as when asked *whether it is important to go to youth program*, 61.64% said yes. When asked what ‘is not liked about youth program’, 57.53% responded *nothing I love youth program*. Some of the qualitative responses given to why young people love Tangentyere’s youth programs, include:

- “I love coming here”
- “because it’s fun”
- “cultural activities” [being offered]
- “I make friends”
- “family” [involvement]

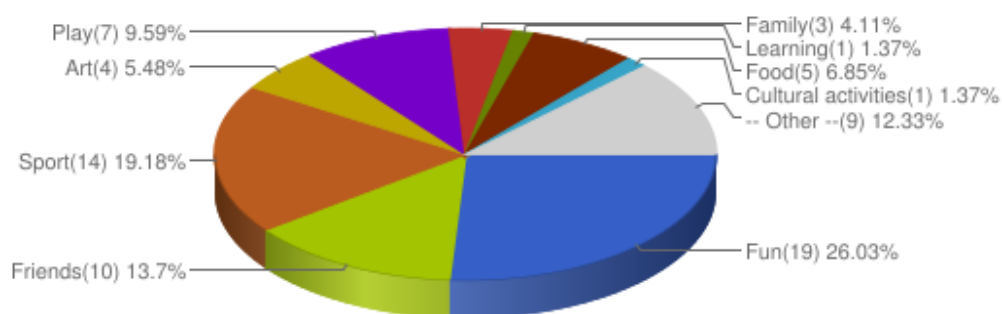


Figure 2. What do you like about Youth Program?

Of the responses to what isn't liked about Youth Programs, 16.44% responded that it was boring. Upon an initial closer look at the data, it appears the majority of those who think the activities are boring are at the older end of the 6-12yrs bracket, or over 13yrs old. One 12 year old responded in the comments, that there are *not much activities for girls of my age*. Evidently this indicates the high need for more funding and capacity for Youth Workers to cater for, and focus on, the 13+ age group, who also tend to be the most 'at-risk'. However, further analysis of the existing data, and a deeper understanding of youth stories is needed to explore further.

In terms of accessing the Town Camp based Tangentyere Youth Programs, a huge proportion of young people are either picked up the Youth Worker in a vehicle, walk, or arrive by school bus. This may clearly point to a need for increased investment in the Fleet services available to the Youth & School Engagement Team.

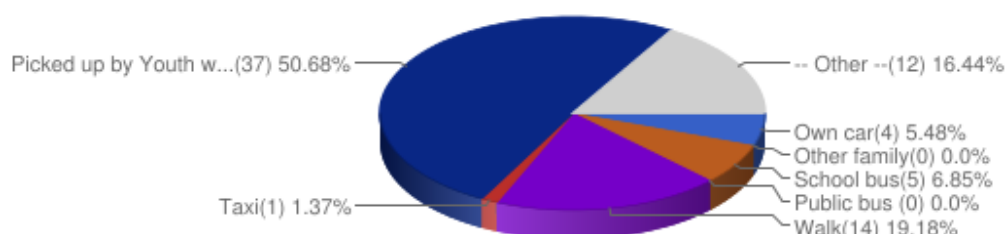


Figure 3. How do you get to Youth Program?

6.2.3 FINDINGS SUMMARY: YOUTH RESPONSES TO ENGAGEMENT IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

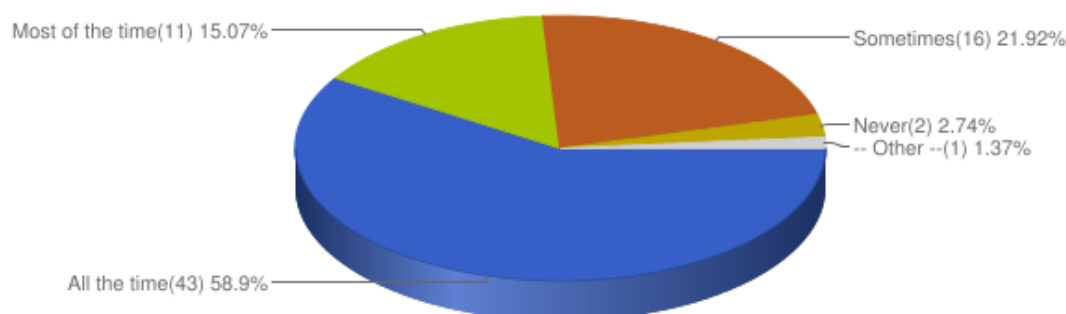


Figure 4. How often do you go to school?

As can be seen above, although 93.15% of young people predominantly aged between 6 and 12 years old know that *school is important*, a combined figure of 73% go either 'all the time', or 'most of the time'. Of all responses, 54.79% responded to say they 'love school'. Some of the things young people claim to 'not like' about school include because it is *boring* (13.7%), *too hard* (8.22%), or *too far away* from home (6.85%). Below displays a graph outlining Young People's responses to how 'hard' or 'easy' it is to learn at school. The data also showed that one of the things young people didn't like about school was that it wasn't taught in language – this might also impact whether young people find it hard to learn.

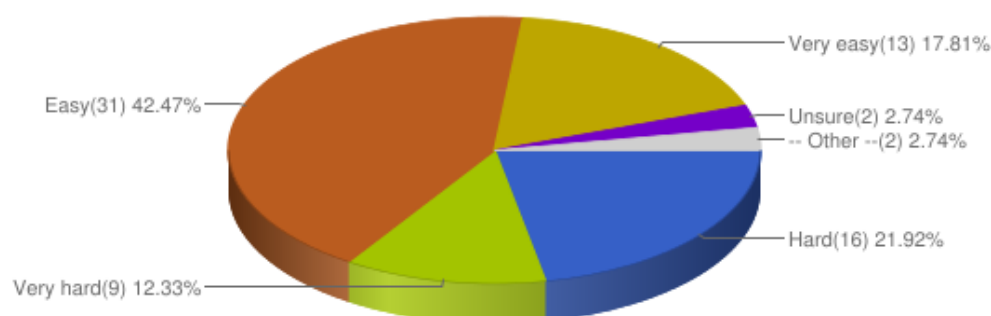


Figure 5. How hard or easy is it for you to learn at school?

6.3 THE WORKSHOP WEEK

6.3.1 DAY 1

As discussed in 5.4, the first afternoon of the workshop week was spent developing the framework for the next three days' events, based on: the team's knowledge of each other; the team's collective skill set; the data gathered through the survey; the indicative participant cohorts based on the survey process; team discussions that had occurred during the survey process; and, the Hub and A2E team's reflections on issues emerging from both the survey data and its process.

Four core areas of enquiry emerged from the discussion: first, how the young people are experiencing school and Youth Program; second, how young people might get involved in research, and how technology can help; third, how the young people use technology now and what access and digital literacy they have; and fourth, how this might be represented

back to community. The first two were consistent with the framing of the research, while the third emerged in light of starting to think through how the young Camp residents might be able to engage with digital technology based on their existing use and knowledge, and the fourth emerged in recognition of the survey and workshops occurring in different locations and with different participants. Running through these was the concern highlighted in 6.2.1 regarding the bluntness of the iPad QuickTap survey format, and a desire to explore hands-on ways that young Camp residents could engage in articulating and representing more evocative and qualitative data and stories.

The University team had brought more iPads loaded with iMovie for any digital storytelling activities, and during the discussion, Tangentyere staff flagged that training in video recording and basic editing would be highly beneficial for both Hub and A2E staff.

6.3.2 DAY 2

The morning of Day 2 was spent training Tangentyere staff in basic video recording and editing on the iPads. All team members that took part were very happy with their level of progress through the session, felt confident in taking their skills into their work, and could see diverse possibilities for using the iPads in their future work.

The afternoon's activities were then planned, and it was agreed to focus on the core methodological question of 'what works in this space?', meaning the Youth Program afternoon space, in light of the stated framing objectives of the research. As such, it was agreed that the team would experiment each day and re-frame each subsequent day in light of the team's sense of what did/not work the previous day. The nature and identification of success was not stipulated at this point – this was to be determined through group reflection. It was also agreed that any primary material created, such as video or audio, would be left with Tangentyere for their future use in line with community objectives regarding attribution, ownership, and distribution.

The basic schedule for the afternoon's activities was an introduction by the primary Hub researcher who had undertaken the majority of the survey work, followed by the formation of small groups that would rotate between a number of different stations and activities, to enable experimentation with a range of data collection and representational techniques. The small group activities for Day 2 were:

1. An online treasure hunt to explore the young Camp residents' digital literacy and comfort/confidence;
2. The creation of short videos in which young Camp residents interviewed each other about their experiences of school and of Youth Program, and learned how to film using the iPads;
3. The butcher's paper sticky-dot survey
4. The creation of 'emotional maps' on large rolls of paper, using textas and sticky dots to draw any of: home; their Camp; the journey to school; school; and, other activities along the 'home-school-after school' trajectory. The young Camp residents could then use the sticky dots to signify particular emotions associated with particular places and/or events on their map. Many chose to turn these into emoji to do this, by drawing faces with diverse expressions on the dots.

Sandwiches were prepared for the children to have at a break time between activities. The activities were intended to be about 15 minutes each.

6.3.3 DAY 3

Based on Day 2, it was felt that the iPad activity needed to be shorter, or needed more focus. It was noted by one of the Hub staff that some of the young Camp residents were getting impatient at having to wait their turn when making the videos, so perhaps a more open and flexible task might work better. Both the mapping and video work needed more time, while the survey and iPad activity needed less.

Therefore, it was decided to break the afternoon's group into two groups rather than four, and run a smaller number of activities for longer. Day 3's schedule became:

1. Introduction to all from the Hub staff
2. All attendees place their responses on the wall survey, having a look at yesterday's responses
3. 10 minutes of mini-trampoline and basketball
4. Two lots of two parallel activities, with sandwiches at the switch:
 - i. Making emotional maps, then videoing their own map and talking about it while they film
 - ii. Making a video – choice of music video, film, or interviews focused on school

The Hub researcher also started documenting the events of the day, using the iPad to video the activities.

6.3.4 DAY 4

Based on Day 3, it was agreed the attendees needed food earlier, as the energy levels in the second activity had clearly started to wane, with impacts on concentration and engagement. The video activity was intended to focus on school, but it was clear this activity needed to be adapted really quickly to the age of the cohort and so on this day, the group agreed to focus on sport as this was what the attendees stated they like about school.

The mapping activity on Day 3 had surprised the research team – the cohort of very excited and boisterous attendees had nearly all engaged substantially with the task, with resulting maps including finely-annotated birds'-eye schematics and maps that blended home and school with significant landscapes from the broader region. The attendees were in the main very proud and happy to talk about their map, with many sitting next to their map and speaking quietly and evocatively to their iPad about the images they had created and the stories the images told. The footage has been digitally archived and determination of its future use remains with Tangentyere. It was also thought that having spent the previous afternoon experimenting with the iPad, it would be good for the Hub researcher to start videoing the activities, as they had missed the earlier Tangentyere iMovie training session, and filming on the afternoon would provide an opportunity to explore and develop those skills.

In light of the scheduling issues of Day 3, the planned schedule for Day 4 was:

1. Mini-trampoline and basketball
2. Sit down, sandwiches, name tags
3. Wall survey
4. Parallel sessions, with switch
5. End

6.3.5 DAY 5 AND BEYOND

The morning reflection on Day 4, and the informal team debrief during clean-up and dinner on Day 4, focused on the unexpected increase in numbers on Day 4. Word had travelled through the Camps and schools, such that a big cohort of very eager young people wanted to attend, with some unfortunately having to be turned away due to the bus being full. This made the two groups quite large, which impacted on the effectiveness of the video-making session in particular. As with Day 3, the mapping task was again popular and effective, which may have been due to the sand drawings the children do both at school and in community, as explained to one of the University team members by one of the children's relatives.

The passcodes to the iPads had also travelled through the Camps and playgrounds, as had the identity of the initial gatekeeper of the iPads, which presented additional challenges for sticking to the planned schedule, but also opportunity for a fair amount of comedic interaction between the researchers and the children. The team was also becoming familiar with the space and community, and starting to learn how to use the position and experience of the Youth Workers to coordinate activities. The increasing familiarity amongst the team members, and with how best to steer the children (or who was most appropriate to) enabled a degree of better management of behaviour and process, but it was apparent it would have been even better to have discussed this more strategically before the workshops. It was also clear that the University team not having at least some local language skills was an issue.

In their May debrief, the University team discussed their sense that despite the frequent and at times bewildering levels of chaos evident in Day 4's activities in particular and in light of the participants being younger than anticipated, there were instances of brilliance in the process and in the input of the attendees. One team member referred to 'the role of the accidental' in creating unexpected and clear moments of substantial engagement and insight, which were only possible due to the open and flexible approach taken. The University team also heard that young Camp residents were enquiring as to when the team would be returning, which strengthened the existing resolve to take the work further based on discussions between Tangentyere and the University that had happened both through and alongside the primary research process.

7 Discussion and reflection

All team members agreed the project was much more complex than envisaged when discussions started in 2015. The scale of the complexity emerged in the active on-ground planning phase, and extended throughout the rest of the project, including the reporting phase. The complexity emerged for a number of reasons, including: the management of a tripartite arrangement (the University, the Hub, and A2E); the new nature of this relationship (no structures in place to guide how to work together, and A2E itself being new); introducing research into A2E's emerging work; the lack of time for deep negotiation; the inherent need for flexibility and creativity in working with young people (here, 7-12 year olds); and, the rich and differing conceptions of research amongst the parties.

The structural complexity of the project drove day-to-day issues that at times were difficult to identify and address as the project went on. As such the complexity grew over time, and the Hub coordinator felt that the ability of the team to be able to adequately recognise issues so that they could be addressed (and, in so doing reduce the complexity) never caught up. These issues included: negotiating the form of activities; planning for 'data' collection; workshop activities and their relationship to each other; and, the absence of key personnel.

The University team were surprised by the younger cohorts that attended the workshops (see 7.1 below); the University team had understood the age would range up to 17 so had to quickly re-calibrate and develop activities to suit each day's cohort. The uncertainty regarding cohort sizes meant the activities also had to be changed daily in response and on the fly in response to each group as they entered the room in terms of age, cohort size, energy levels, and personalities. This was really felt to have not worked for the video-making on Day 4 as there were simply too many children in attendance for the two groups to be of manageable sizes.

The University team felt it would have been ideal to work with smaller groups, and if possible with the same group each day to enable skills progression. On reflection, the interview format in video making worked well as the structure of the interview took the focus away from the fact that the attendees were creating an artefact. This also seems to be the case with the emotional mapping, where the maps provided a focal point for the subsequent filming by the attendees. Creating a video on an unspecified topic from a standing start was at times simply too much to achieve, especially with the bigger and more boisterous groups.

7.1 NEGOTIATING THE PROJECT – MOVING FROM A BILATERAL TO A TRI-PARTITE ARRANGEMENT

The evolution of *Keeping Strong* highlights numerous factors impacting the research process and relationships, not all of which were under the control of the team. While at times a fraught and confusing experience, this is in line with much literature on engaged research that recognises the contingent nature of such work.

For *Keeping Strong*, initial project discussions in 2015 envisaged a group of emerging leaders from the Town Camps, identified by staff in the Family and Children's Services Division of Tangentyere, coming together to discuss issues of concern and then, through targeted sessions (with University digital technology specialists) using digital devices to tell stories about their lives. This particular vision would thus meet the needs of the three interested parties quite neatly – the Hub would participate in a project in which they would work directly with young people to identify issues of concern, and, would learn about new ways for different groups of people from Town Camps to tell their stories. The University would learn about young people's issues, their proficiency in using digital devices, and assist them to tell their stories and learn from this experience as to what works and doesn't work in this context. And the Family and Children's Services Division would get to participate in a new kind of program that would assist young and emerging leaders to talk together to identify issues of concern and be trained in new ways of having their voices heard.

Making this vision a reality started to become complicated when, due to changes to Tangentyere's funding as a result of the federal government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the Family and Children's Services Division was disbanded and its remnants restructured into a new Division called Access to Education (A2E). This period of restructuring, like all restructures, entailed instability, both from structural and emotional points of view. While the restructure was happening (recognising that restructuring is a process rather than an event) it was impossible to proceed with how the project might dovetail with the new structure and the imperatives of the new Division; however, there was a commitment to proceed with the project by all parties and negotiations, while limited in their extent, did proceed through the restructuring period.

It became clear that a strong focus of the new A2E Division was on younger people than those originally envisaged as the target group for *Keeping Strong*; A2E's core focus included school engagement, youth programs, and the desire to develop wrap-around holistic services. This meant that the original cohort envisaged to be engaged through the project changed to a younger one, but it was also not entirely clear who exactly would be engaged because now the project would be run through the youth programs established under A2E. These programs target a younger cohort of Town Camp residents, in line with the funding provided to A2E for services that focus on school engagement with these groups.

It was now apparent that there were a diversity of interest groups in the project, and any clarity that had existed was being subsumed under the day-to-day realities of negotiating a program in a moving space and a diminishing timeline. In addition, although it was not apparent at the time, the iterative nature of developing the agenda for the project meant that it was difficult to move to a clear position on what the whole team was going to do, bearing in mind of course that no matter what was decided that flexibility is still required in working with Town Camp young people!

The team felt that by taking an iterative approach it would be possible to mould the project to the needs of the three groups (the University, A2E, and the Hub); however, the combination of an increasingly compressed timeframe and organisational changes at Tangentyere meant there was not enough time for that approach to be as effective as it might have been. The team agreed on a way to frame and focus the project during negotiations in February. However this focus changed in light of further discussion around day to day practicalities within Tangentyere and how the project would add value to the work of A2E. This change of focus meant that deeper work to refine the it in terms of the potential activities in the workshops was not able to progress as far as the team would have liked. This meant the workshop aspect was largely developed during the workshop week, largely guided by the daily meetings.

As it turned out, though the team was not aware of it at the time, the idea of the project helping the Hub to explore alternative methodologies in terms of engagement and storytelling slowly fell away as a critical focus. Instead the project workers focused more on a nuts-and-bolts approach that drew on the way the Hub (mostly) do things, rather than exploring how things might be done differently. This was exacerbated by the fact that practices within Tangentyere explore this were not instituted, but this in turn was due in some part to the lack of digital proficiency and limited digital infrastructure to try things out.

In hindsight the Hub felt the problem was that they did not do enough preparatory work to ensure that everyone was broadly on the same page, and that this was created by a lack of time and lack of awareness on their part as to how to effectively manage a three party process with groups in different places. The University team felt a bit helpless watching Tangentyere struggle with a restructure, and with the conflicting demands and timelines of that restructure on the one hand, and a looming research deadline on the other. In response to the pressures seen to be affecting the Tangentyere team, the University team stepped back from attempting to shape the research up too much given the shifting structures and programs, and focused instead on equipping themselves with a broad enough skillset and flexible enough stance to hopefully accommodate a range of possibilities. In contrast to the Tangentyere teams' assessment, the University's team feels that Tangentyere handled a very complicated situation very well. In hindsight, the situation may have been helped by more effective communication from the University team to the Hub, that the University was realigning its approach in light of Tangentyere's process. Cross-institutional discussions focused on logistical updates and on maintaining good relations by clarifying that the delay

and the restructure were not deal-breakers for the University; however, that logistical busyness and relationship management sidelined clarification of how each party was amending its research approach in light of the changes in train.

Overall, the University team's sense is that while greater preparatory work with regard to the deeper issues being interrogated through the workshop activities, and a greater focus on this in terms of the conscious diversification of research praxis would have been ideal, the overall question of 'what works in this space?' as posited by the Hub on day 1 was valid and was able to be explored through the workshops. The University team's sense is that greater communication to the Hub and A2E teams about the University team's emerging stance in the build up to the workshops could have helped ameliorate some of the Hub teams' discomfort, and may have provided a stronger collective footing in terms of having an agreed stance that was flexible, but consistently framed.

7.2 THE PROCESS FOR WORKING AFTER THE INITIAL MEETINGS AND LEADING UP TO THE WORKSHOPS

The outcome of the planning workshops was that the project would seek to work with young people around the concept of Kinship Care. The rationale was this would work with existing data in an area important for A2E, and which would allow young people to tell stories about their own experiences of how care is conceptualised and undertaken in their Town Camps.

Following this the Hub and A2E started talking about how they would do the work and pretty soon it was clear that because neither had been involved in the Kinship Care work done in 2015, it was unreasonable to expect them to follow up with young people to discuss what can be a sensitive issue. In addition it would have meant taking the A2E coordinator away from her job focus (support programs for young people to increase school engagement) to work on something with unclear outcomes. As a result Tangentyere decided that the best thing to do was to base the preparatory work around the A2E youth programs and that the Hub would assist, using their research skills.

Therefore, discussions between A2E and Hub staff tried to identify a way of working together that would suit the needs of each party. Once the Hub and A2E were on the 'same page' the next challenge was project information would be recorded. It was at this point that the Hub feels they fell back into their traditional way of doing things, which is survey-driven research. A2E negotiated for the University to send two iPads in advance of the next round of workshops, giving A2E and the Hub a chance to familiarise themselves with the iPads in the preparation period.

With time being of the essence, the Hub and A2E sat down and started to work out how to proceed. It was decided to try to talk to as many young Camp residents as possible about the core aims of A2E and of the programs for which the relevant A2E team member was the coordinator. The A2E Manager provided some background work that she had done with the Hub researchers, and it was decided this would be a good basis for proceeding. Essentially the Hub and A2E were seeking basic information about young people's perceptions of schooling and of the Youth Program. The logic was this would begin the process of talking with young people and helping them to identify what they liked (and didn't like) about the things they were involved in, and that this would help the team (in the workshops) to go deeper into their experiences, which the young people might then be able to make digital stories about.

In practical terms it was decided that a relatively simple iPad based questionnaire would be the way to go for the preparatory survey activity. It would allow both researchers and young people to participate in the data collection and would give everyone a chance to familiarise themselves with the iPads. Further it would also allow relevant data to be collected that would be able to inform the work of A2E and to suggest fruitful areas for further work – particularly for the workshops.

It became apparent at this stage that A2E and Hub staff had different foci in with regard to what the project was intended to achieve and the best way to move forward. The Hub manager felt partly at fault for not ensuring that A2E and the Hub were doing the work required to make sure they were on the same page. Those difficulties were felt to be exacerbated by the limited time and the desire of A2E and Hub staff to be out and doing things. This was particularly the case during the school holiday week. They were determined to try to interview as many people as possible, so it felt like it didn't make sense to start questioning the process that was already in place.

Significantly (and unrecognised at the time) the A2E and Hub teams were not progressing with the idea of exploring other ways of collecting 'data'. There may have been the expectation that this would take place during the workshops; however, an opportunity to examine *how* the teams were working was not taken at this time, in part due to the lack of time to engage in discussions around this.

The University team's sense of this time was that the compressed timeline and the three teams being in different locations meant there was not the opportunity to explore much by way of new research methods at this stage, and again that Tangentyere worked within a fairly non-ideal situation to create something of value. While in an ideal scenario the University team would have liked to have taken things further in terms of new methods, their sense was that an iPad-based survey was at least a move into a new space for Tangentyere, which built on existing staff expertise so was readily manageable but which presented enough novelty to hopefully get young Camp residents interested in the workshops and in the idea of research. It did also present a new technology and interface to both the Hub and A2E with regards to their work, and which was built on to an extent in the workshop week.

The shifting terrain and tight timeline meant the University team could not delve very deeply in their preparatory work; the approach had to be wide, flexible and consequently relatively shallow. Sometimes profane things were said in corridors, but with laughter. The team leader kept the focus on adjusting the skillset in light of developments within Tangentyere and while team spirits were high and generally excited by the pending visit, the possibility of failure was lurking in the teams' minds. This was acknowledged and respected, with discussion clarifying that the overall framing was still appropriate and that the skillset and materials were being tweaked to hopefully allow for contingencies. It was very clear that the team would need to think on their feet and be prepared for the unexpected.

7.3 THE WORKSHOP WEEK

In terms of what happened during the workshop week the first thing to note is that the Hub coordinator was not as involved as they felt they should have been, due to extenuating circumstances. This meant that their ability to draw together the research agenda in its broad sense, the data, and the range of ideas at work was limited. However, their input when present was deeply reflective, and presented vital moments in the overall process of iterating, refining, and reflecting on the work.

7.3.1 POTENTIALLY CONFLICTING AGENDAS – WHAT WERE THEY?

One of the main considerations that the Hub coordinator felt (but never pursued because it seemed unproductive to do so) was whether the cohort recruited for the project by Tangentyere was not that which the University had in mind. Originally the University and the Hub had discussed a group of perhaps 20 older youth (perhaps 15 and older) being brought together for the purposes of the project. However, this evolved into a broad approach with no specific recruitment strategy (i.e. interviewing young people who came along to youth programs when the researchers were there with the iPads). This meant that a lot of the people who became involved were quite young. It also meant that they had no particular 'hook' in relation to digital storytelling. They were just a bunch of people who turned up.

In the process of A2E becoming involved, the University team lost sight of the shift to a younger cohort, presumably as the sudden busyness of readying and sending iPads and preparing for workshops became primary concerns. While the survey participants were, as flagged by the Hub, essentially 'just a bunch of people who turned up', over the course of the workshop week the reasons for participating for workshops may have changed as word of the activities spread. In hindsight it might have been good to ask the young people why they had wanted to come along to the workshops, and how many had previously taken part in the survey.

The change of cohort was one source of potential differences between the three project partners. A2E was interested in the views of the people who use their service, and in their perspectives about the program and school engagement. The Hub's interest was in exploring different methodologies; however, this took a back seat as the Hub became more focused on how it might work with another section of Tangentyere on something they were doing. In hindsight there was not enough time to do all the work required to get to answer all the questions that working across (Tangentyere) Divisions clearly implies; however, the Hub and A2E were not to know this in advance. Of course there was the possibility of tensions also between the University and those of both of the Divisions of Tangentyere.

The University team was surprised by the change in cohort age, but felt no tension towards Tangentyere because of that. The team managed to respond to the age cohort and adjust the activities in response to each day's insights, but it has to be acknowledged that different team members bore very different loads with regards to the amount of effort and flexibility required each day. The team leader's sense is that the team dealt with the vagaries and challenges with skill, humour, and intelligence. The activities that eventuated highlighted some skill sets as more relevant than others; however, this was inevitable given the breadth of skills amassed to allow for the unexpected.

7.3.2 WHAT WAS THE RATIONALE FOR THE ACTIVITIES?

The lack of shared understanding around the purpose of the workshops made it difficult to plan and implement workshop activities that were directed to particular ends. As a result it was unclear what the underlying purpose of some of the activities was in terms of the overall project goals; however, there was also no process by which this could be negotiated over the workshop week beyond the immediate pragmatics of what activities seemed to be keeping the attendees engaged while speaking to issues of digital and visual storytelling and data representation. The Hub manager's sense is the result was a series of activities were conducted, of which the outcomes and the uses going forward are unclear.

Broadly, the activities comprised a range of techniques for young Camp residents to represent and visualise their thoughts and experiences, including: digital storytelling as manifest in film-making; the visual representation of emotional data through the maps; and, the enactment of the iPad survey in large-scale, hands-on, hardcopy format. From the University teams' perspective, the core issue was that there wasn't enough time (and perhaps energy) to dig deeper into the utility, significance, or potential of these techniques. However, there is scope and interest to explore these issues further in future work with Tangentyere.

Despite the perceived incoherence on one level, the workshops were seen by all as very effective in terms of the team work that underpinned them. The Tangentyere and University teams enjoyed the workshops as they demonstrated a growing level of trust between the project partners, and a growing respect for the different forms of knowledge at work. The workshops proved to be a fruitful space in which trust developed, and the commitment of each of the staff of the three organisations to the project and its outcomes was clear. It was apparent that despite—or even perhaps because of—the unpredictable nature of each afternoon, the team at large was willing and able to step into a space of negotiation, collaboration, and adaptation. This contributed to the workshops having a good and friendly atmosphere, which augers well for future work between the organisations and people on the Town Camps. In terms of the overall project, the University team feels this was perhaps the most significant success of the work; certainly it resonates with work on appropriate methodologies that highlights processes and relationships as of equal importance to the perceived 'data' outcomes (see Sherwood, 2006; Smith, 2012).

7.3.3 HUB COORDINATOR ABSENCE

As indicated, for reasons beyond their control, the coordinator was unavailable for the daily activities. As such they were also unable to contribute meaningfully to the discussions held each day to reflect on the previous day's activities and to plan for the following afternoon.

The coordinator's absence at the workshops also compounded some of the difficulties emanating from the data collection period, in which not enough had been done to get all the Tangentyere staff on the same page in relation to the project's activities. This again was exacerbated by the short time frames and the fact that there were no University staff (as the other significant project partner) in Alice Springs during the lead-in time, and so Tangentyere was constrained in terms of having iterative conversations that might have assisted in moving things along.

On reflection this absence was significant for the project. Having been involved in the initial discussions, and having a sense of the benefits for the Hub from participating, the absence was telling as the negotiations failed to clarify the situation. Again the timeframes were an issue; however, greater interaction between all parties via telephone or videoconferencing, particularly as the workshops drew closer, may have made a difference to the process and outcomes of the project. In particular, it may have allowed for cross-institutional interrogation of what the afternoon activities were articulating with regard to the project's overarching objectives.

While the University team were able to debrief to an extent amongst themselves, they were not comfortable doing this to any great extent in the absence of Hub staff in case this took the project in a direction that was unilaterally decided, even if unconsciously. The University attempted to manage this by taking to each day's preparatory meeting any issues they felt were pressing so that the Hub staff could respond to these and the activities and/or approach

be adjusted if and as appropriate. In some ways, this was also representative of a more general tension some of the University researchers felt between carrying out the project as true partners with the Hub staff, and communicating clearly about their own research objectives and skill-sharing. In much engaged research, especially with First Peoples, there is a history of academic researchers dictating to communities how research should proceed, placing their own research priorities ahead of community needs, and disregarding skills and knowledge practices of non university-affiliated participants. Often, when striving to undertake research that does not continue that history, the easy path is to take a more passive role in the research and defer to non-university partners on everything. However, this approach is frequently non-ideal for research outcomes and can fail to respect the abilities and goals of all parties. There was some discussion among the University team about whether the right balance between diverse knowledge and skill sets was struck in this respect; this matter becomes easier to judge as the teams grow to know and trust each other more.

7.3.4 YOUNG PEOPLE'S DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE, ACCESS, AND PROFICIENCY

One of the big issues in terms of the success (or otherwise) of the project was the ability of the cohort assembled to meaningfully engage with digital technologies in order to make visible their experience of the world. In this it is not so much the age of the young people assembled, but rather their ability to articulate their experience using digital technology. Rates of mobile phone ownership (or possession) and peoples access to other digital devices is largely an unknown in the Town Camp context. Research conducted by Tangentyere in 2007 placed the mobile phone ownership rate among Aboriginal people in Central Australia at 56% for those over the age of 18; however, this included people from remote communities and the town of Alice Springs (Tangentyere Council & Central Land Council, 2007). Given this rate and the increasing availability of mobile phones it would be safe to assume that the proportion of people with a mobile phone has increased. While mobile ownership has probably increased, the fact remains that little is known about digital device ownership or usage amongst young people from Alice Springs Town Camps.

Compounding this lack of knowledge is the lack of understanding of kinds of digital literacy of various groups, such as young people. People's knowledge of various devices and their capacities will determine how they are able to use them. It is likely that young people's digital literacy varies enormously, and that this in part will depend on what kind of access they have. This lack of knowledge impacted on the workshops because we did not know what abilities the young people had and so it meant that there was no ability to frame activities around actual, rather than perceived, proficiency.

The first day's iPad activity showed that digital literacy varied greatly, and that a core part of this related to English literacy especially amongst the younger ones. Attempts were made to load the iPads with apps in language, but this highlighted the sorry fact that there were none available other than an app for recognising local plants that would not load. Most of the attendees knew YouTube, and had favourite things they liked to watch their – particularly sports or music videos. The iPads were also loaded with non-textual brain teasers and a drumming app, both of which the attendees found and navigated without help from the team.

Lastly people's access is another issue that affects digital technology usage. The mobile phone research conducted by Tangentyere shows that access costs are an issue for many people, and that many people have periods of time when they are disconnected from services due to lack of money. The iPads were transferred to Tangentyere to be available as

an ongoing resource for the Hub and A2E, but clearly there is a need for Town Camp residents' access to digital infrastructure to be documented and developed.

7.4 INTERNAL TANGENTYERE CHALLENGES

As noted elsewhere this was a new venture for Tangentyere. Although there has long been interest expressed in the Hub working with other units and divisions within Tangentyere to 'value add' to the work they are doing with Town Camp residents, no projects have been undertaken that have sought to work formally in partnership.

Given the focus on school engagement and youth programs, a large proportion of the responsibility for the logistics of the program accrued to A2E. The Youth and School Engagement Coordinator throughout the project, was the link in between the Hub and the University on the logistical side of: preparing the research software; setting up the surveys on iPads; facilitating the workshop logistics; and, organising the tangible engagement with the young people as the focus of the research. This 'filling in the gaps' role was perhaps most visible through the workshops.

The A2E Youth and School Engagement Coordinator saw there were a range of benefits to Tangentyere (as a whole) presented by arranging the project with A2E at its centre (rather than the Hub). It was good that the focus of the data collection process was on youth perspectives and with an A2E agenda (amongst others between the Hub and the University) focused on the real life concerns of young people in relation to school and the programs that Tangentyere offers them.

The Youth and School Engagement Coordinator coordinates the 5 Youth Programs across 17 Alice Springs Town Camps and as such had the responsibility, capacity, and skills to support the arrangements, consultation, and supervision of events under the project. Further, the potential to share research processes and benefits outside the Hub had the potential to deliver substantial long term benefits. The Youth and School Engagement Coordinator was the most junior researcher in the partnership, and was provided with a rich learning experience to engage in the Hub's community-led research methodologies, learn about professional research processes and networks, and develop the capacity to value-add to the long-term goals of A2E and the Youth Development objectives.

Lastly, there was potential benefit of drawing on formal university learning through the Youth and School Engagement Coordinator's formal education. The coordinator's participation contributed hours to their final placement in a Masters of Social Work course with Queensland University of Technology, as authorised by Tangentyere Management. This was unknown by the University team, however, so was not drawn on to as great an extent as might have been possible.

The Youth and School Engagement coordinator felt there were additional challenges presented to Tangentyere as a whole, and each of the Divisions, through this project. Firstly, due to the breadth of the Youth and School Engagement coordinator's role, developing a restructured and newly based Youth Program across the 17 town camps while attempting to engage deeply with the accompanying research agenda, was a difficult position. It was expressed by various parties in the Tangentyere Council, and also in the research partnership, that the coordinator was 'spread too thin'. This was not a criticism but rather a concern for their work balance and capacity to work well.

The inability within the organisation to dedicate more time to the Youth and School Engagement coordinator as a new researcher to work with the Hub clashed with appropriate research methodologies, as these inherently include spending wholesome time to connect with people and Elders in conversation without interruptions from competing interests. It also in turn took away from the coordinator's ability to be taught by, and to learn from, Aboriginal researchers.

Further, a breakdown in communication, and lack of clarity of role distinction between the coordinator's role as coordinator and researcher in the project, resulted in questions being raised about the balance of priorities between the Youth Program roles and responsibilities, and those of the A2E research objectives. This included concerns that the Youth and School Engagement Coordinator's personal course work focus was overshadowing core Coordination duties. The lack of formal arrangements within Tangentyere to identify these issues, and have processes to deal with them were not established in advance of the project, and thus this difficult situation was unable to be resolved satisfactorily for the parties involved.

7.5 WHAT RESEARCH IS, HOW IT SHOULD BE CONDUCTED, AND THE POLITICS AND EPISTEMOLOGIES THAT UNDERLIE THIS

The last significant thing to note is that because this was both an action project (producing digital stories) and a research project (understanding how young people can and might use technology to enhance their wellbeing), conceptions of what research 'is' should have been a front and centre consideration. However, as noted, the compressed timeline meant that some of the things that may have helped to bring this out were not able to happen.

The researchers within the Hub have a particular conception of what it means to do research, and a clear idea of the benefits of doing research under this conception. The researchers also know that this conception is not shared by all other researchers, and that some other researchers do not consider some of the things that Hub researchers take seriously as proper research considerations. Thus all research with Hub has both political and epistemological dimensions that need to be considered; however, knowing this and finding ways to talk about them effectively and productively is not always that easy.

The three way nature of this project meant that epistemological issues such as 'who knows', 'how do they know', 'what do they know', and 'how do they know that they know', which are critical for framing up how research will be designed and undertaken did not emerge in the planning phases in any strong sense. Looking back, the project, being a new venture, meant that the first consideration was the establishment of relationships. The Hub was trying to build working relationships with two parties simultaneously, while also trying to plan a project in a short space of time, and equally this was the case for the other partners.

While epistemological concerns ought to have been up front, as any serious intercultural work deals with epistemology whether it likes it or not, it necessarily sat in the background as we sought to develop our relationship. It is also the case though that issues such as epistemology can also be *sensitive* – they cannot just be launched into without some background or relationship that enables them to happen safely. The (ongoing) colonial history of central Australia is one in which Aboriginal peoples' knowledge practices have not been taken seriously, or actively attacked. Therefore conversations around epistemology are not politics-neutral. In hindsight more time was needed to engage in relationship building,

enabling conversations about knowledge practices and the role of the project in meeting the various needs of those assembled to be had safely and productively.

While that discussion was not able to be had as fully as possible between all three parties, the project was established and proceeded on the basis that the University team leader had previously worked with the Aboriginal researchers at the Hub, prior to the employment of the Hub's current manager. That research practice and relationship had proceeded on the basis that the lead University researcher had immediately deferred to the Hub staff's knowledge and expertise as Aboriginal community members and researchers, and had built from there in terms of identifying appropriate research methods and opening discussion regarding Hub and University mutual learning and capacity development.

Further, the University team leader repeatedly reaffirmed that position to both the University team and the Hub researcher as the basis of *Keeping Strong* – both in terms of being the reason why the conversation about the project had started in the first place, and its subsequent *modus operandi*. Hence, while the discussion of epistemology and appropriate research in a recovering colony was unable to be had collectively across all three partners, facets of it occurred in fragments and in enough spaces such that, in combination with the core longer-term relationship underlying the project, the process and the relationships were kept strong and respectful.

7.6 THINKING BACK OVER THE PROJECT AT LARGE

The June debrief, while missing some team members, was able to open up some of the neglected terrain of the project. Having had some weeks to decompress from the workshops, it was agreed that the project had aimed to experiment with different ways of researching with community, exploring both the knowledge it produces and the processes it involves.

The role of technology in this was reflected on; noting that from day one technology had been core in enabling the team to work at distance, albeit subject to the time and organisational pressures discussed previously. Further, the project had sought to embed technology in data gathering, but also to move beyond technology as a tool and move towards the idea of the team's philosophy towards technology as both a data gathering mode but also as a way to engage partners and participants. Hence the research position was more about how to interact with technology and different ways of integrating technology into storytelling; storytelling was perhaps the object of enquiry, but the overall position and process and its construction of knowledge, also played pedagogical roles both in terms of how the research proceeded, the ways the teams thought about what was happening, and how research would be imagined and undertaken in future.

Respect was also given to the diverse sets of knowledge practices—tacit, formal, and implicit—that in dialogue, structured the process. This created a space of reflecting on the process of 'what we do in research with children', including talking, listening, sitting, laughing, and how our worlds coincided productively in this space. Implicit in this was tacit boundary-setting, while we all navigated different conceptions of what research is. For the CRC team, this resonated with other work that had triggered thinking about the open-ended catalysing effects of asking people to think about things in dynamic partnership. All agreed it was much easier to see this retrospectively than to deliberately and deliberately engage in this within a compressed timeframe.

It was also acknowledged that a question remained unanswered about the definition of rigour in a diverse knowledge space. In the Hub's work, two strong research methods and

orientations remain in dialogue yet also sit uneasily together. One concerns embodied research practice – getting the right people working in the right way, supporting the Elders and community, and listening appropriately in a grounded way, with a focus on how to make things better. The other concerns traditional Western social science methods of surveys, questionnaires, answers, spreadsheets, and stories written for academic or grey literature, all of which Hub researchers have been trained in and continue to develop. A question remains as to if and how new research methods can work in this space, how to build on and extend the existing skill set, and how in that context rigour might be identified and defended.

It was agreed that given the work the Hub does is already inherently flexible and contextual, there is an ironically underexplored capacity to consciously articulate and further the Hub's research as an exemplar of post-structural research practice. Some of this boils down to an issue of professional development, and an identified need and desire for ongoing mutual learning between the University and the Hub, to build the collective understanding and skills of both teams in a safe and exciting space. However, some of this also boils down to the history of the embodied, contextual, and flexible knowledge practices of Aboriginal peoples being dismissed and invalidated by research entities, including universities. In light of a history of interfacing with a paradigm that only sees particular forms of knowledge, there is great need and potential here to rethink research and also rigour. It was agreed that there is a need for research to be involved in change such that people can feel strong, and know that their stories are important, and should be making people sit up and take notice.

In the process of writing up this report, the University team reflected on the fact that the role of technology in the young Camp residents' lives was not reflected on or built upon in any structured way; see also 7.3.4. This was intended in the workshops that had initially been devised for older attendees, adults and Elders, but was not factored into the relatively impromptu workshops for younger attendees in as coherent a manner. The young workshop attendees all engaged quickly and fearlessly with the iPads, navigating the interface and apps well, and more than able to notice and complain if and when the portable wi-fi router was switched off. In combination with the earlier work of the Hub that found young Aboriginal residents of Alice Springs writ large were early adopters of mobile phones (Tangentyere Council and Central Land Council, 2007), this would suggest there is possibly vast untapped potential for digital capacity and skills amongst the young Camp residents. The lack of apps in language, lack of school classes being taught in language as flagged as an issue by workshop attendees, and potential (although undocumented) lack of digital infrastructure and access on the Camps, all highlight avenues where this potential might be developed. Moreover, these represent spaces in which appropriate methods for developing digital skills in culturally strengthening ways, and in ways that create content to prompt different thinking amongst policymakers.

The issue of succession planning was not able to be addressed either, which raises several related issues. Prior to the Tangentyere restructure, the workshop plan was to bring older teenagers, adults, and Elders into discussion with the research team about the role of digital technology in young people's wellbeing, and as a technology for keeping individuals, communities, and culture strong including through the work of the Hub. The workshops were intended to facilitate reciprocal learning between different age cohorts, and include hands-on research activities that would then be discussed afterwards, with a view towards identifying what technologies and methods the attendees wanted to pursue and develop, and how the Hub would facilitate that in a way that built new and younger researchers up.

Having been one of the primary intended participants in the work, due to the pressures and form of the restructure, the 13-19 age cohort remains conspicuously absent. Further, their

potential disengagement from Tangentyere programs was highlighted by the attendee discussed earlier who pointed to a lack of activities for people her age. Anecdotally, Tangentyere research and youth workers know this age is when Camp residents can start having trouble, which would suggest this is a crucial stage at which to be looking at ways to help people keep strong. Consequently, there remains the pressing issue of how to facilitate the development of this older cohort's probably high level of digital usage, and also use this to build capacity amongst this and other cohorts, through processes and platforms that strengthen individuals, communities, and culture.

8 Conclusion

The Alice Springs *Keeping Strong* work ended up as a bit of an enigma; while it was not really clear what had been achieved, there was a sense on behalf of all the participants that it was definitely worthwhile, productive, and suggestive of future work. As noted in the discussion there were many factors at play that simultaneously made the project difficult when considered from the perspective of 'did we follow the plan?', while also providing an answer of 'yes', even if the implications of that are not yet clear. One researcher stopped at one point and surmised 'I don't know what happened, but something is *different*', highlighting the near constant to-and-fro between cognitive and emotional learning across the process.

There were issues to do with navigating through new institutional relationships against the backdrop of a prior research relationship based in mutual recognition and trust, restructuring at Tangentyere, understandings of research and its role in doing knowledge work, time, and the variable availability of key personnel. These all contributed to making the project hard to unpack in terms of meaning, but nevertheless one of the main outcomes is the sense that the work done was worthwhile, and that it provides a good platform to engage in future work. It may be that the process from here needs to integrate, or at least talk about, the main cognitive and emotional lessons of the work.

It must be noted that this project was planned to take place in a 'messy' context. Indeed, part of the rationale for the project was to try to find ways to work effectively with people whose digital knowledge and access was unknown, and whose views and issues are not readily able to be articulated. Further it sought to operate in a way that understood the instability of the context, and so consciously eschewed 'strong' structuring as this was not seen as something that would enable the kinds of engagement the project needed for it to be effective. In addition, the work was also seeking to further develop good relationships and practice in a cross-institutional and cross-cultural setting, and in a meaningful way.

It is interesting and perhaps not surprising therefore, in attempting to report on the project, that it resists easy attempts at explanation. The messiness of the context permeated the project at all but the initial stages, and led to a project that was reacting to what was going on as it went on, while working on numerous levels. Credit must be given to those who were active throughout the process, who sought to use the messiness productively, moving from one challenge to the next without every falling prey to the feeling that things were not 'going to plan', when it would have been easy to do so. To that extent, the framing stance, preparatory work and baseline relationship of respect stood up well under at times immense and immediate pressure.

None of the difficulties the project faced (as documented in this report) threw it off the rails; however, it is also the case that many of the potential lessons that might have been actively incorporated into the iterative cycle of doing, learning, adjusting, and doing were not

identified in a timely manner. This indicates the importance of two things: one, that adequate time must be factored in to do the negotiation work that enables all players to identify issues that affect them, and to be able to work through them with the other parties; and two, that there must be a specific focus on epistemological and political matters amongst all team members, and that strategies to address these critical areas are built into projects that operate in an intercultural space.

The conclusion to the active part of the project encapsulated some of the issues that emerged as problematic throughout the project. A final debrief was planned on the Friday morning before the University team flew back to Sydney. This was intended to give everyone a chance to talk about their experience, and (hopefully) to identify issues to enable the 'messiness' of the project to be understood; however, due the absence of key personnel, the lack of a stated framework to work through the epistemological and political issues, and the lack of time (i.e. it couldn't be done any other time) meant that this took place in a truncated way. This has resulted in difficulties in reporting, as several issues that would have benefited from ventilation in this space remained unaddressed. Subsequently, difficulties getting the project team reassembled (in their respective far flung places), meant that this report has been written without the contributions of some of the key personnel in the project.

However, all of these factors are able to be documented precisely because of the engaged and flexible nature of the team's orientation. It is possible that the university team could have tried to force a faster rate of progression on the work, that the Tangentyere team could have decided the university timelines were unworkable, or that the collective team could have decided that the restructure meant the situation was untenable for research. Any of these would have yielded very negative outcomes in terms of the research relationship, alongside either no data or essentially meaningless data if a process had been devised, imposed, and upheld by the university rather than worked up by the entire team on the ground. The fact that the team completed the project during institutional change, were able to negotiate processes and timelines amidst diverse obligations, and are actively exploring options and projects for future work together, was only possible due to the entire team holding an open and emergent stance, in line with core lessons and objectives of appropriate First Peoples research.

9 Recommendations for future work

Several recommendations emerge from this process that have immediate relevance for Tangentyere and the University from here, but which also may translate to other contexts and relationships:

1. That the project purpose be clearly articulated to all parties' satisfaction prior to beginning activities. This entails defining project roles, and the development of a clear structure that all parties subscribe to. Importantly this needs to resist rigidly defining how the project will proceed, as flexibility and the ability to incorporate new information and change approach is necessary to ensuring that the project is responsive and meets the needs of participants.
 - For projects that envisage non-researchers participating in research activities, clear outlines of what this entails in terms of activities, time commitments, and relationships with researchers should be agreed amongst the parties

2. Adequate time must be allotted to ensure that correct (according to Hub guidelines) research procedures and protocols are followed. Time for reflection, negotiation, and feedback must be factored in to project planning to allow projects not only to work closely with participants, but to engage Elders and other parties to ensure oversight and legitimacy. While this was built into the initial work schedule, the restructure compromised the ability to do this in the face of a looming and unmoveable research deadline. For this, the team may re-convene to identify how to return to that work post-deadline.
3. The Hub, with the support of Tangentyere as a whole, could consider a research role dedicated solely to working with other departments. This may alleviate some of the difficulties that arise from conducting projects across Divisions, particularly in terms of who takes the 'leadership' role in planning and conducting research focused activities.
4. Dedicated 'reflective space' to be factored in to any future projects. As noted any project such as *Keeping Strong* operates in contested epistemological and political space, the nature and form of which does not pre-exist the project. Therefore it is very important to specifically and consciously structure time to address these issues, partly to ensure that they are addressed (i.e. not sidelined because of other time pressures), but also to ensure that these issues are put on the table as key issues of concern. Because of their nature, and the potential difficulty in identifying epistemological and political issues, they can be easily overlooked, or their role in a project misunderstood. Therefore specific attention must be paid to these aspects of any future project.

Tangentyere and the University both look forward greatly to pursuing these matters in future work together.

10 References

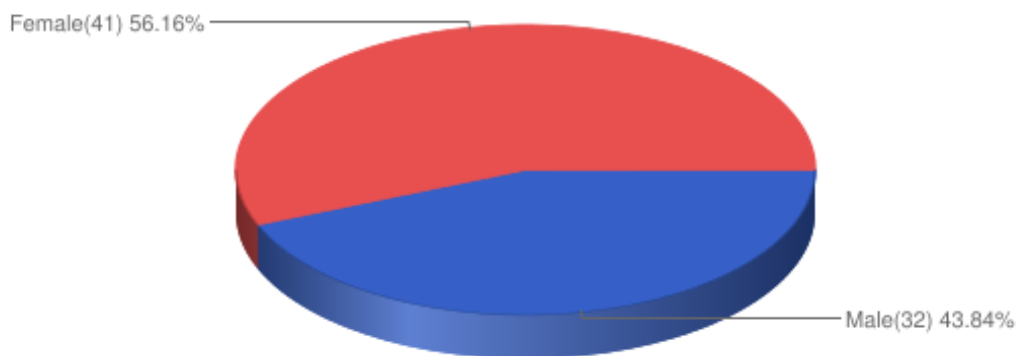
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11 Appendices

11.1 APPENDIX A: YOUTH ACCESS IPAD SURVEY RESULTS IN GRAPH FORMAT

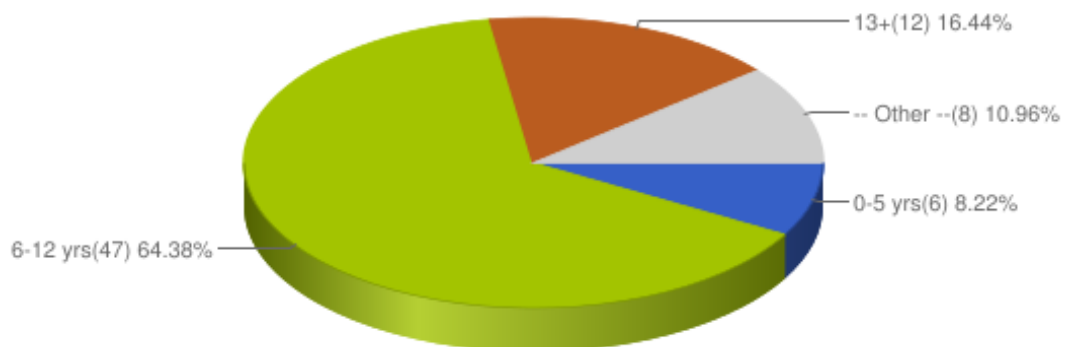
11.1.1 WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



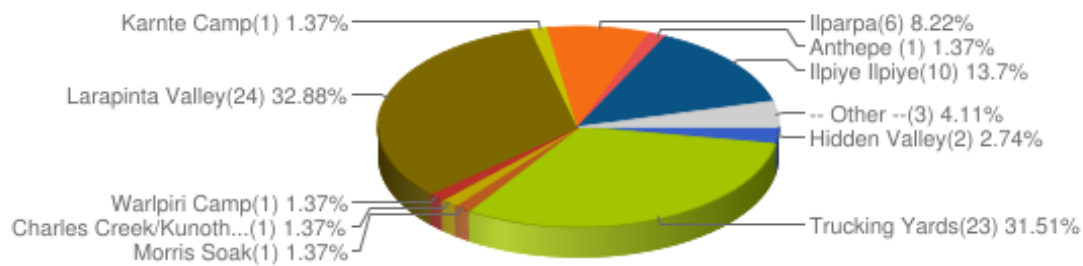
11.1.2 HOW OLD ARE YOU?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



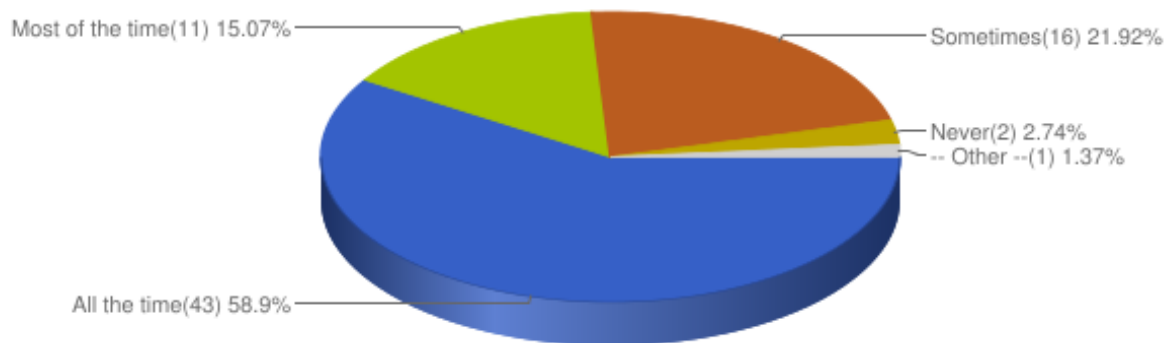
11.1.3 WHICH TOWN CAMP ARE YOU FROM?

Results based on 73 responses to this question. Answers with 0% of results have been filtered.



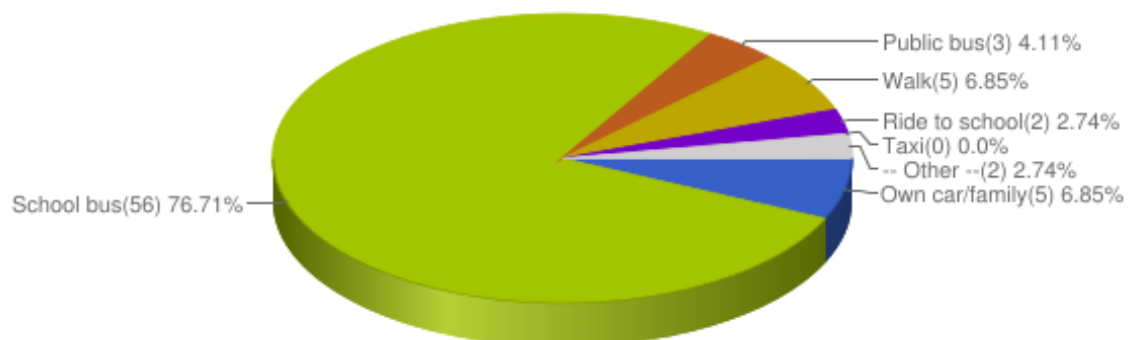
11.1.4 HOW OFTEN DO YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



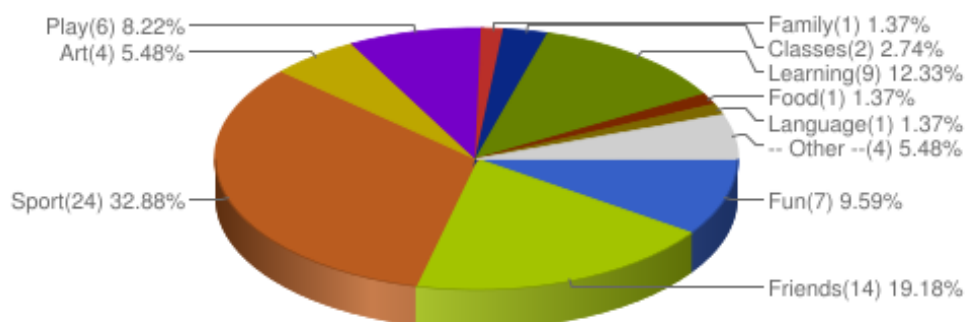
11.1.5 HOW DO YOU GET TO SCHOOL?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



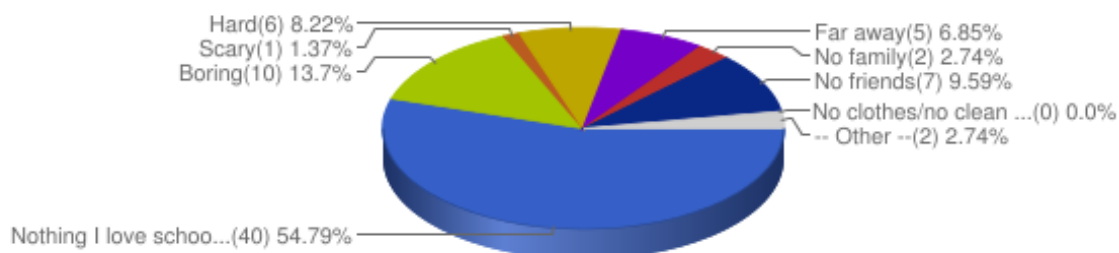
11.1.6 WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT SCHOOL?

Results based on 73 responses to this question. Answers with 0% of results have been filtered.



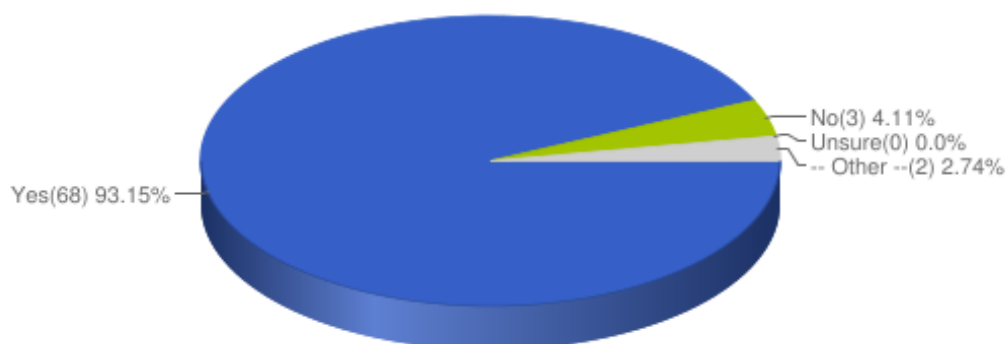
11.1.7 WHAT DON'T YOU LIKE ABOUT GOING TO SCHOOL?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



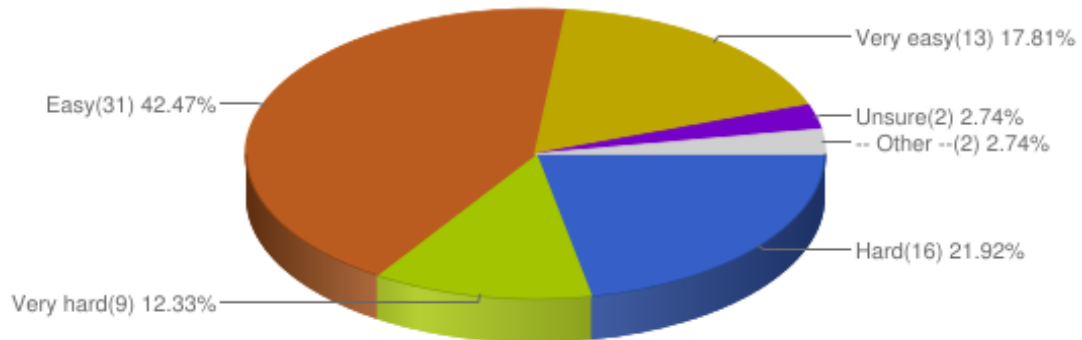
11.1.8 IS IT IMPORTANT TO GO TO SCHOOL?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



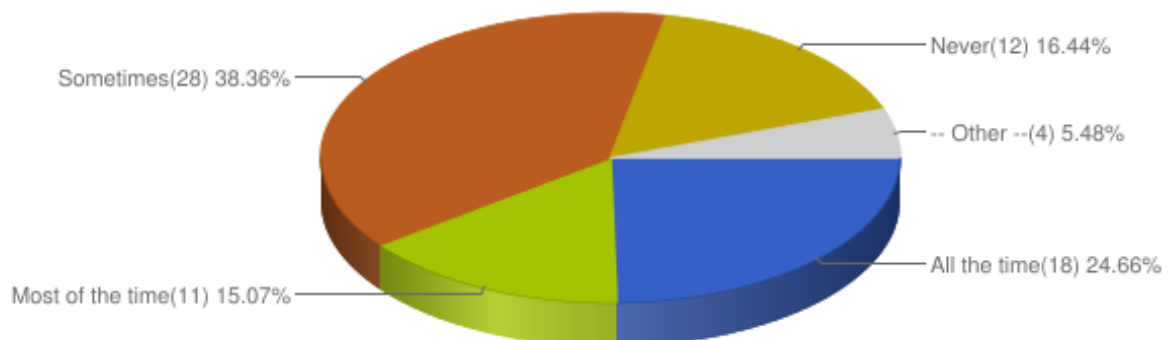
11.1.9 HOW HARD OR EASY IS LEARNING AT SCHOOL FOR YOU?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



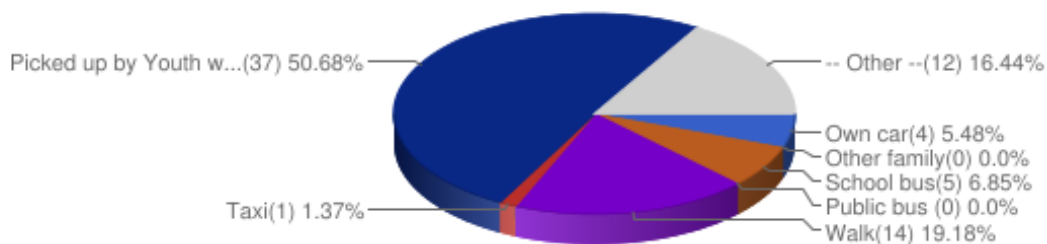
11.1.10 HOW OFTEN DO YOU GO TO YOUTH PROGRAM?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



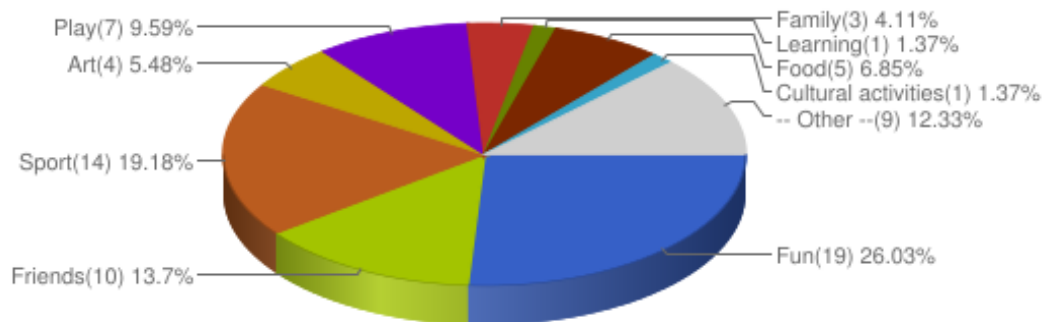
11.1.11 HOW DO YOU GET TO YOUTH PROGRAM?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



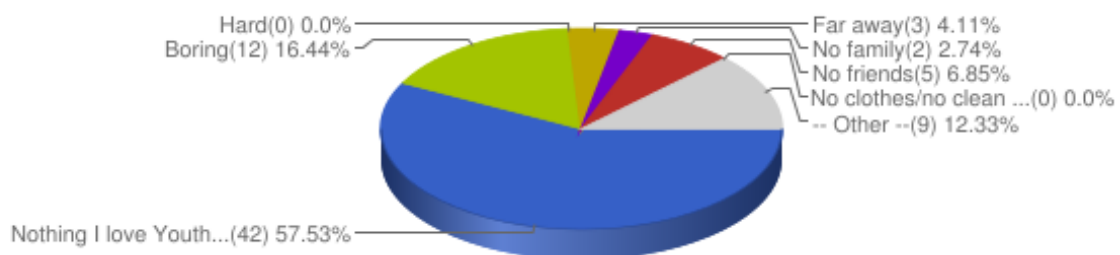
11.1.12 WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUTH PROGRAM?

Results based on 73 responses to this question. Answers with 0% of results have been filtered.



11.1.13 WHAT DON'T YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUTH PROGRAM?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.



11.1.14 IS IT IMPORTANT TO GO TO YOUTH PROGRAM?

Results based on 73 responses to this question.

