

YOUNGAND**WELL**

Cooperative Research Centre

Young Newly Arrived Migrants and Refugees in Australia

Using Digital Storytelling Practices to Capture Settlement Experiences and Social Cohesion

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April 2016

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Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Innovation and Science

Business
Cooperative Research
Centres Programme

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ISBN: 978-1-74108-410-8

Suggested citation: Bansel, P., Denson, N., Keltie, E., Moody, L., Theakstone, G. (2016) *Young Newly Arrived Migrants and Refugees in Australia: Using Digital Storytelling Practices to Capture Settlement Experiences and Social Cohesion*. Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, Melbourne.

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Acknowledgements

The Western Sydney University research team –Dr Peter Bansel, Dr Nida Denson, Dr Emma Keltie, Lilly Moody and Georgina Theakstone – are highly appreciative of the efforts of staff at the School of Social Sciences and Psychology and the Institute for Culture and Society in supporting this project. We would like to thank Savannah Pride, AMES Dandenong Migrant Centre, Melaleuca Refugee Centre and Organisation X (who requested not to be named) for their assistance and support in recruiting and organising the young people for the workshops and advising the team at various points of the project.

We would also like to sincerely thank the young people who participated in the project for their insights and contributions during the digital storytelling workshops and in the online survey.

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

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Table of contents

- YOUNG NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN AUSTRALIA..... 2**
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 3**
- TABLE OF CONTENTS..... 4**
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 5**
- INTRODUCTION..... 8**
- BACKGROUND..... 10**
 - 1.1 RECRUITMENT..... 12
 - 1.2 PARTICIPANTS 13
 - 1.3 ONLINE SURVEY..... 15
 - 1.4 DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND CREATIVE CONTENT PRODUCTION
WORKSHOPS..... 16
 - 1.5 OBSERVATIONS AND FIELD NOTES..... 17
- 2 KEY FINDINGS..... 18**
 - 2.1 MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA..... 19
 - 2.2 BELONGING 20
 - 22
 - 2.3 ASPIRATIONS 22
 - 2.4 CHALLENGES..... 23
 - 2.5 EDUCATION 25
- 3 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 27**
- 4 CONCLUSION 30**
- REFERENCES..... 31**
- AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES 34**

Executive summary

Purpose

This report presents the findings of a research project capturing the settlement experiences and social cohesion of newly arrived young migrants and refugees, and how these young people transition into Australian communities. This project was conducted by the Young and Well CRC, and aimed to gather information on the experiences of young migrants and refugees aged 12-25 years of age who currently live in Australia. This project had two broad aims. The first aim was to provide a snapshot of the experiences and personal narratives of young migrant and refugee youth. The second aim was to give young migrants and refugees an opportunity to contribute to the development of community and professional resources that will lead to greater awareness of the needs of newly arrived migrants and refugees in the wider community.

Background

Newly arrived migrants and refugees are a marginalised group in society, and subject to a range of socio-cultural inequities that impact on their health and well-being. These issues can be compounded by traumatic experiences, forced displacement (in the case of refugees), and cultural dislocation. The transition period can therefore be a difficult time for migrants and refugees as they adjust to life in Australia. This period can also present a unique set of challenges for young people, whose experiences can be exacerbated by difficulties in bridging education and language gaps, experiences of discrimination and bullying, and the challenges associated with negotiating a path into adulthood (Refugee Council of Australia, 2009).

A growing number of those arriving in Australia under the humanitarian and migrant programs are young people under the age of 25. Forty-two percent of humanitarian entrants and 26% of migrants in the skilled stream entering in the last five years were under 25 at the time of arrival (Department of Social Services, 2015). Of migrants under the age of 25 who entered Australia from 2010-15, the majority (61%) were in the skilled stream, 27% in the family stream, and 12% were in the humanitarian stream (DSS, 2015). The major regions from which the young people originated from are southern Asia (29%), Chinese Asia (16%), and the United Kingdom (11%). The major countries from which the young people originated from under the migration programme are: India, China, UK, Philippines, Pakistan, Irish Republic, Vietnam, South Africa, Nepal, and Malaysia. In terms of migrants per state, 30% are in New South Wales, 24% in Victoria, 14% in Western Australia, 12% in Queensland, 1% in the Northern Territory, and 2% in ACT. In this study, there were a total of 36 young people

who participated in the digital storytelling workshops. Of the 36 young people, there were 19 females and 17 males. The young people came from the following countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Sudan, Uganda, Congo and Kenya. In terms of how long the young people had been in Australia, it ranged widely, from 3 weeks to 10 years.

Study Design

The research included 3 main research activities: an online survey; digital storytelling developed in creative content production workshops, and; observations and field-notes taken during the workshops. The purpose of the online survey was to provide a snapshot of the experiences of young migrants and refugees in transitioning to life in Australia. The creative content production workshops provided an in-depth examination of the experiences and personal narratives of young migrant and refugee youth.

Key Findings

The findings drawn primarily from both the digital storytelling and creative content production workshops and observations and field-notes, along with some of the open-ended responses to the survey, informed the development of five key findings about the following:

- 1) Multicultural Australia
- 2) Sense of Belonging
- 3) Aspirations
- 4) Challenges
- 5) Education

Participants noted their initial surprise at the diversity they observed when they arrived in Australia. They suggested that this visible diversity in Australia allowed them to feel more at ease and less conspicuous than they had anticipated. The participants emphasised the importance of community organisations to their developing sense of belonging, both in their local community and as Australians. The young people were extremely appreciative of the services, support and social activities organised by the organisations and the opportunity to engage with other multicultural young people. In terms of aspirations, the participants shared similar aspirations with most young Australians: to 'get a secure and decent job' - in a bank, become a nurse, join the army; study at a good university; get a car; find a partner, buy a home and have a family. Many recognised that improving their English language skills would open up opportunities, emphasised that they wanted to build a life here and that they considered that their future children would be Australian. In terms of challenges, many of the

young people spoke of the challenge of learning English, understanding English in school, struggling to catch-up with the curriculum and becoming language brokers for parents who didn't speak English (and therefore relied on them to navigate certain systems such as health or social services. Navigating public transport and getting lost contributed to feeling uncomfortable and embarrassed, and navigating bureaucracy and the legal system around everyday activities such as learning to drive and gaining a driving license were a source of confusion and frustration. However, they also stated that once they found friends and started studying that things got easier. This points to the central importance of schools as places for language learning, building friendships and integrating into their new communities and Australian society.

Implications & Recommendations

Despite the small sample size of young migrants and refugees in this study, there were a number of key recommendations that emerged from the project. The following recommendations are provided to assist young people from a migrant or refugee background as they transition into Australian communities.

1. Recommendation: the Australian government should provide increased funding for community organisations to help young migrants and refugees (and their families) transition to life in Australia.
2. Recommendation: the Australian government should provide funding for sports organisations and/or sports activities in schools and community organisations as a way to help young migrants and refugees increase their sense of belonging and connectedness.
3. Recommendation: there should be increased opportunities for young migrants and refugees to access English language courses to improve their English language skills.
4. Recommendation: The Australian Government should provide young migrants and refugees increased access to education and training that leads to a career pathway.
5. Recommendation: The Australian Government should provide increased education opportunities through multiple sources and services, both formal and informal, to young migrants and refugees and their families to build everyday skills.

Introduction

Australia is a diverse and multicultural society. In 2015, the proportion of Australians born overseas hit a 120-year peak, with more than one-fourth (28%) of Australia's population (6.6 million people) having been born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). A recent press release by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2016) asserts that overseas migration has contributed more than half of the population growth in Australia since 2005 (ABS 2016). According to the 2011 Census data, approximately 3.7 million youth (aged 12-24) live in Australia; of these, almost 600,000 were born overseas, and a subset of approximately 48,000 are refugees (Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia [MYAN], 2014).

While many migrants and their children may have chosen to come to Australia, others (e.g., refugees) may have been escaping war, famine, or conflict in their home country and may have come to Australia alone or without all their family members. Thus, the socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and personal backgrounds of these populations are by no measure homogeneous, and as a result, their transition experiences may be diverse and their individual challenges multifaceted. Furthermore, the settlement process presents a range of challenges which can undermine social integration and negatively impact health and wellbeing (Foundation for Young Australians [FYA], 2009), placing these groups at a greater risk of social exclusion and entrenched disadvantage over the course of their lives (Centre for Multicultural Youth [CMY], 2006).

Young migrants and refugees in particular face the vast challenges of adjusting to a new social and cultural environment while simultaneously negotiating a path into adulthood. These unique experiences, coupled with the fact that an increasing number of those arriving in Australia are young people under the age of 25 (Department of Social Services, 2015), reflects a need to understand the experiences of this growing group and to address the challenges they face as they transition into Australian life.

The aim of this pilot project was to examine the issues and experiences of young migrants and refugees aged 14-25 years. We were interested in seeking young people's stories and perspectives on a broad range of issues related to social cohesion, including identity, health and wellbeing, education, technology and access to services.

The research asked 4 key questions:

1. How are the young people adjusting to life in Australia?
2. How do the young people feel about their local area, neighbourhood and Australia at large?
3. How do the young people use the internet and social support services?
4. How do the young people feel about their health and general wellbeing?

The project focused on how young newly-arrived migrants and refugees transition into our communities and involved three main research activities: an online survey; digital storytelling developed in creative content production workshops, and; observations and field-notes taken during the workshops. The purpose of the online survey was to provide a snapshot of the experiences of young migrants and refugees in transitioning to life in Australia. The creative content production workshops provided an in-depth examination of the experiences and personal narratives of migrant and refugee youth.

The methodology adopted in the digital storytelling workshops represents an innovative and participatory approach which sought to not only explore the experiences of these young people in creative ways, but also to transfer a set of digital literacy skills which can enhance participation in, and engagement with, social and cultural life. The workshops used iPads installed with the iMovie application which are accessible and simple platforms for carrying out a range of creative practices. These new technologies open up exciting possibilities for creative expression and active participation which can serve to empower young people from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Background

According to the 2011 Census data, the top 10 birthplaces of CALD born youth aged 12-24 are (in decreasing order): China (18%), India (10%), Philippines (6%), Malaysia (5%), Hong Kong (4%), Vietnam (4%), South Korea (4%), Indonesia (3%), Singapore (3%), Iraq (2%), and other CALD countries (40%). Paralleling the top 10 countries of CALD born youth, the top 10 languages spoken at home for CALD born youth aged 12-24 are (in decreasing order): Mandarin (18%), English (15%), Cantonese (6%), Arabic (5%), Vietnamese (4%), Korean (3%), Punjabi (3%), Hindi (3%), Indonesian (2%), Tagalog (2%), and other languages (38%). Overall, there is great diversity in the languages spoken at home, with over 200 different languages/dialects represented overall (MYAN, 2014).

We conducted a literature review regarding the experiences of young migrants and refugees in Australia. The majority of the research on migrants and refugees in Australia has been conducted on adults, with an emerging focus on the experiences of young people aged 14-25. In addition, while there are some studies on young people more broadly, these tended to be on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) youth, with no distinction amongst those born in/out Australia, migrants (e.g., first generation, second generation, etc.) and/or refugee youth. There is also very little research on the mental health, wellbeing, social support and community connections they experience (MYAN, 2014).

Findings from the literature review identified a number of issues that young migrants and refugees face as they transition to a new life in another country such as Australia. These include:

- Adapting to a new culture and language (MYAN, 2014).
- Lack of familiarity with Australia's social systems (MYAN, 2012)
- Negotiating issues of belonging and identity in a cross-cultural context (MYAN, 2014).
- Experiences of racism and discrimination (VicHealth, 2008)
- Difficulties accessing health and community services (Victorian Department of Human Services, 2008)
- Difficulties accessing health services for mental health problems (de Anstiss et. al 2009)
- Bridging education and language gaps in new schooling environments (Refugee Council of Australia, 2009)

- Negotiating family and community relationships during a period of adolescent transition (National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, 2002)
- Establishing supportive peer groups (Refugee Council of Australia, 2009)
- Finding suitable employment (Davidson et. al. 2004)

Research carried out with newly arrived migrants and refugees can face challenges associated with participants having a “range of literacy skills and languages ... [and] diverse pre-arrival experiences” (Gifford et. al. 2007, P.415). Digital storytelling is an innovative participatory methodology frequently utilised in community development settings and work with marginalised populations (Podalicka & Campbell, 2010). The approach draws on creative expression and reflection on one’s own life experiences through combining images, video, audio and story-sequencing using a digital media platform (Robin, 2008). The creation of these digital memoirs serves a number of purposes. These include providing an outlet to reflect on personal experiences and identity (Sawhney, 2009); connecting marginalised populations to the wider community, often through screenings of stories (Tacchi et. al. 2009); addressing unequal access to and participation in the digital economy (Burgess, 2006); and providing training in digital literacies (Tacchi et. al. 2009) which enable these populations greater access to opportunities for social visibility and economic mobility (Nutt & Schwartz, 2008).

As a research methodology, digital storytelling further opens up a space for a valuable exchange between researchers and participants. Rather than simply being passive subjects of academic research, participants in digital storytelling workshops are afforded agency and autonomy through developing critical skills and creative capacities (Hull & Katz, 2006) which are used to inform the research aims. For vulnerable and marginalised populations, this is a particularly powerful methodology, as the skills acquired during these workshops have the potential to empower, build resilience and enhance participation over the long term (Hull & Katz, 2006; Sawhney, 2009). A digital storytelling approach in research with vulnerable populations is therefore a valuable one; shifting the dynamic away from a hierarchical researcher-participant relationship to one which allows a horizontal exchange of skills and knowledge.

1 Methodology

Research into refugee health and wellbeing is fraught with difficulties (Ahearn 2000). The methodological problems of carrying out research with migrant and refugee populations range from issues of language barriers and cross-cultural translations through to the practical issues of negotiating with community gatekeepers (Bloch 1999). A key methodological challenge of developing an appropriate research approach is the difficulty associated with eliciting information from a population with a range of literacy skills and languages, and who have diverse pre-arrival experiences. It is therefore important to establish a sense of trust between researchers and refugee communities and community organisations (Hynes 2003). This has led to an increasing recognition of the value of participatory approaches focused on research *with* rather than *on* refugee communities (Briant and Kennedy 2004; Johannsen 2001). The digital storytelling approach taken in this study addresses this question of participatory research with young people rather than on them. The study employed three interrelated methods of data collection:

1. An online survey
2. Digital storytelling developed in creative content production workshops, and;
3. Observations and field-notes taken during the workshops.

1.1 RECRUITMENT

Prior to conducting this project, we obtained ethics approval from Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number H11350). Both the survey and the creative content production workshops included young people aged between 14 and 25 years of age. The researchers were particularly sensitive to the complex ethical issues, including the impacts of possible experiences of bullying, discrimination and social exclusion on wellbeing, and of asking young people to recount experiences of migration and refugee experiences embedded in this project (Jacobsen and Landau 2003; Rodgers 2004). Further, it was recognised that many of the participants, and in particular those newly arrived, may be most proficient in languages other than English. Recruitment was therefore a critical consideration and the primary mode of recruitment of potential participants was therefore through partner and community organisations. Relevant partner and community organisations were approached and asked to: 1) forward an invitation to young people who accessed their service or participated in their activities to distribute to their networks information about the research and a link to the anonymous online survey, and: 2) offer to

host and promote the creative content production workshops. Interestingly, the overwhelming majority of organisations expressed reservations about the research, claiming that the young people we wished to engage in the research were an exhausted and over researched population. That these organisations acted as gate keepers concerned with protecting young people speaks to the perceived sensitivity of the research and vulnerability of young migrants and refugees. Further, this reluctance to participate significantly impacted distribution of information about the survey and responses were hence small in number, and not statistically useful. There were however, some responses to the open ended questions that contributed both perspective and breadth to the findings from the content production workshops.

The creative content production workshops were received far more enthusiastically by organisations. This approach emphasised a mutual exchange between the researchers and participants in terms of transferring technical skills and training for participation and knowledge. This approach addressed the challenges of recruitment presented by the survey as organisations recognised this to be an opportunity for the young people to be actively involved in an activity that had educational merit and relevance.

Following standard procedures for ensuring ethical conduct of the research, all participants who volunteered to be involved in the online survey and/or creative content production workshops were fully informed about the purpose of the research and the use of their contributions and gave informed consent to participate.

1.2 PARTICIPANTS

In total, 4 creative content production workshops were conducted, one each in Sydney (Savannah Pride) and Melbourne (AMES Dandenong Migrant Centre) and two in Darwin (Organisation X and Melaleuca Refugee Centre). A total of 36 young people aged between 14 and 25 participated in the workshops.

SAVANNAH PRIDE

Savannah Pride is a community organisation that combines basketball and education programs to build at-risk young people's self-esteem, develop their life-skills and provide a structure for growth based on education and sports (Savannah Pride n.d.). Savannah Pride runs their activities out of Blacktown Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC). Blacktown is an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community. Almost one in three

people in Blacktown were born in a non-English speaking (NES) country, and nearly one in two speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home.

The Blacktown workshop involved 10 young people (all male) aged 14- 20 years. The group consisted entirely of refugees from Sudan who had been in Australia for up to ten years. All of these young people were keen basket-ballers and belonged to the same team.

AMES DANDENONG MIGRANT CENTRE

AMES assists new and recently arrived refugees and migrants to settle in to Victoria. In addition to teaching English, AMES works with new arrivals and the community, business and Government to develop sustainable and effective settlement solutions for the whole Victorian community. AMES' vision is "full participation for all in a cohesive and diverse society" (AMES, 2011). Dandenong is situated 30km south east of Melbourne and is the hub of one of Melbourne's most culturally diverse areas with approximately 55% of Greater Dandenong residence born overseas.

The Dandenong workshop involved 11 young people (8 females and 3 males) who were migrants from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Iraq. The newest arrival had been in Australia for three weeks and the longest two years.

ORGANISATION X

Situated in Darwin, Northern Territory, this education organisation provides a wide range of courses for students in years ten - twelve that ensures students can achieve a pathway to their desired career. Over 30% of attending students are from CALD backgrounds and approximately 20% are Indigenous. The organisation provides a range of specialised educational and sporting programs, as well as a committed ESL department which provides ongoing support to CALD students in subject choices, pastoral care, maintaining family relationships, employment assistance and liaising with government agencies. Darwin is one of Australia's most cosmopolitan cities, with a population made up of people from more than 60 nationalities and 70 different ethnic backgrounds.

The Organisation X workshop involved 4 young people (3 female, 1 male), aged between 16 and 18, who had been in Australia from 2-10 years. Two participants were migrants from the Philippines, one a migrant from Vietnam and one a refugee from Myanmar.

MELALEUCA REFUGEE CENTRE

Melaleuca Refugee Centre Torture Trauma Survivors Service of the Northern Territory Inc. provides services for resettlement and healing of refugee survivors of torture and trauma, their families and community, and is a community controlled, non-profit organisation operating from Darwin (Melaleuca n.d.).

The Melaleuca workshop involved 11 young people (8 females and 3 males) aged 16-18 years. The group included refugees from Congo, Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan and migrants from the Philippines. Many of the refugees had been born and/or grown up in refugee camps before coming to Australia.

1.3 ONLINE SURVEY

The survey was designed for young migrants and refugees aged 16-25 who were currently living in Australia. The survey was designed for participants to complete in their own time. The survey contained a combination of both close-ended and open-ended questions, and took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

The development of the online survey was informed by the following sources to ensure it addressed relevant issues in the health and wellbeing of young migrants and refugees:

- Past research
- Past and current national surveys on migrants (e.g., Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion survey)
- Young and Well CRC standard measures
- The expertise of the investigators.

The online survey included questions about: demographic and background characteristics, their feelings about Australia, safety and discrimination, their local area and neighbourhood, their general wellbeing, their life in general, and their use of the internet and social support services.

The *demographic and background characteristics* included questions on their age, gender, education/employment, country of birth, years living in Australia, languages spoken, visa/residency status, religion/faith, and frequency of contact with friends/family in their former home country. The *Feelings about Australia* section included questions about their sense of belonging, satisfaction with life in Australia, political party affiliation, political actions, and views about themselves and how they relate to the world. *Safety and Discrimination*

questions asked participants about trust of others, physical and emotional safety, frequency and locations of experiences of discrimination, and impacts of experiences of discrimination. The section on *Local Area or Neighbourhood* included questions on feelings of social cohesion in their local area or neighbourhood. The *General Wellbeing and Life in General* sections asked participants how they feel about their life, health, and happiness as a whole, as well as their prediction on the quality of their life in three to four years. The last section of the survey asked participants about their *Use of the Internet and Social Support Services*. This section asked participants their views on whether the Australian government provides adequate services for them and their family to settle in Australia, as well as their use of the internet (e.g., internet sites they visit the most often, frequency of time spent using the internet, reasons for accessing certain sites). A link to the online survey was distributed through our networks and to our partner organisations who further passed on the survey link to potential respondents.

1.4 DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND CREATIVE CONTENT PRODUCTION WORKSHOPS

The use of iPads for digital storytelling and creative content production served three intersecting purposes: an innovative research methodology; a mode for collecting stories of experience from young people who were newly arrived migrants or refugees; and skill development and education in the use of digital creative content production for young people.

The 4-6 hour, creative content production workshops provided: technical skills and knowledge related to the use of an iPad for digital storytelling; a structured approach to storytelling and storyboarding; and making a digital story. Prior to the workshop, participants were invited to reflect on any of the prompts provided in the information and preparation sheets they received. The prompts were designed to focus attention on the key objectives and questions of the research and elicit the sorts of stories that would give insight into them. These prompts also informed the conversations and sharing of stories of experience that took place within the workshops. The prompts were:

- 1) What were your first impressions of being in Australia?
- 2) Who was the first person you met in Australia who you liked? What were they like?
- 3) Think about a situation you felt uncomfortable in: what was it like? What made you feel uncomfortable?

- 4) Think about a situation you felt comfortable in: what was it like? What made you feel comfortable?
- 5) What is your favourite family story?
- 6) What do you think your life will be like in 5 years?

Participants were also invited to bring objects of significance that related to their stories to aid both the oral telling and the filming of their stories. At the beginning of the workshop participants had an opportunity to share their stories with each other and talk about the similarities and differences among their collective experiences. It was these conversations that both provided context and detail and informed the development of the vignettes included in the discussion of the findings and key messages.

This oral story telling was followed by a training session focused on: selecting and editing images, clips and sound from a library pre-loaded onto the iPads; searching the internet for images, clips and sound using Creative Commons; and filming live footage. Participants were subsequently trained in basic elements of narrative construction and storyboarding techniques which assisted them in shaping their own stories. The technical skills and vocabularies developed from practice sessions using the preloaded libraries were then transferred to the telling of individual stories. Whilst the young people were invited to tell stories related to any of the 6 prompts, they were also free to tell any story that reflected their interests or experience. The digital literacies and language abilities across the four groups varied greatly and researchers adopted a flexible approach when delivering the training in order to respond to the specific needs and skill levels of the participant groups. The digital stories that the young people produced were contextualised and supplemented by the oral storytelling and incidental conversations recorded in the researchers' observations and field notes.

1.5 OBSERVATIONS AND FIELD NOTES

The research team made observational notes during the story telling and storyboarding phase of the workshop, and recorded reflections in the team debrief after the workshops. These notes and reflections captured the conversations and stories that were not always included in the digital stories made by the young people. These notes and reflections provided context and detail to the digital stories and informed the identification of key themes and the development of the findings and messages.

2 Key Findings

While conducting the research, it became apparent that researching young migrants and refugees had some associated difficulties and challenges. In particular, there was a very low response rate for the intended national survey, which was due to a combination of language barriers and cross-cultural translations as well as negotiating with community organisation gatekeepers. The online survey only had 34 responses in total, limiting the generalisability of the results. Thus, we do not present any quantitative findings from the online survey.

Given that the workshops with the young people were focussed on the preparation of digital stories of experience, it was initially expected that the digital stories would form the corpus of data for analysis. However, once the digital stories had been made, it was clear from their form (approximately one minute each) and the wide variety of styles (including repurposing of existing images and music within copyright constraints, live film, drawings and other images accompanied by voice overs) that the making of the films themselves was an important training/learning activity rather than primarily data collection. The digital stories alone were therefore inappropriate for systematic analysis. Throughout the workshops the researchers compiled field notes based on the conversations and stories that the young people were invited to share, and the qualitative analysis was based on a thematisation of these field notes. They were thus more indicative of common stories and experiences that could not be reduced to reliable analyses of specificities or differences according to gender, race, ethnicity and so on.

The key findings presented here are drawn primarily from both the digital storytelling and creative content production workshops and observations and field-notes, along with some of the open-ended responses to the survey, informed the development of five key findings about the following:

- 1) Multicultural Australia
- 2) Sense of Belonging
- 3) Aspirations
- 4) Challenges
- 5) Education

It is important to note that these findings reflect the participants' decision to make digital stories that reflected their current interests rather than the aims of the research. Having said this, the digital stories themselves, along with the field notes and observations, reflect a number of

valuable insights. Importantly, none of the oral or digital stories that the young people told addressed experiences of discrimination or racism in any form. This is not of course to say that they had not experienced discrimination, but rather that they did not choose to tell such stories despite prompts that opened opportunities for them to do so. It is interesting to note then, that the stories told were ones of pleasure and of optimism for the future. These are important findings, as they counter narratives of marginalisation and vulnerability and suggest that for some young newly arrived migrants and refugees, living in certain places and under certain conditions, enables them to live lives that reflect the preoccupations of most people their own age – stories of romance, partnership and family, of freedom and opportunity, of improved material conditions, of community and belonging and the importance of involvement in sport and other organised community events. Critically, all of the participants commented on the importance of the organisations through which they were recruited to their wellbeing and integration into Australian culture and society. We suggest that this constitutes one of the essential conditions for the participants and others like them to feel and live well in their community. These preliminary observations inform the discussion below of each of the five themes.

2.1 MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

Participants noted their initial surprise at the diversity they observed when they arrived in Australia. They suggested that this visible diversity in Australia allowed them to feel more at ease and less conspicuous than they had anticipated, ‘I see lots of people from all over the world in the street and this makes me feel good’; ‘The Australian community has been very welcoming and doesn't judge you because of your ethnicity’. It is significant then, not to underestimate the positive impact of the diversity that comes from multiculturalism on these young people’s health and wellbeing and opportunities for social integration. Further, as a result of this diversity they described how they had opportunities to both build new cross-cultural friendships as well as receive support from communities who shared cultural and linguistic similarities. Some of the participants described how in making the journey to Australia they had seen white-skinned people for this first time. These experiences of multicultural Australia exposed the young people to diversity and difference that they described as lacking in their home countries. They expressed the view that being in a multicultural country meant that they didn’t need to identify themselves as migrants ‘because everyone is different’. Even when recognising that they are migrants to Australia, the young people reported feelings of equality, which often contrasted with their experience of

discrimination in their home country or refugee camps. One participant noted that having had similar/equal opportunities as non-migrant young people 'has been great ... it has helped with my self-esteem and building my resilience and confidence'. Whilst none of the participants spoke directly of experiences of racism, bullying or discrimination, one participant noted that 'despite the current issues multicultural young people face in Australia, I feel welcomed and the Australian people I've experienced have been very inclusive'. Importantly, these experiences of multiculturalism, equality, diversity and inclusion contributed to a sense of place and belonging.

Most Aussies are very friendly and love to reach a helping hand. Most importantly, people accept people who are different from them and really respect diversity.

- Survey Respondent: Male, 24, living in Australia less than 1 year



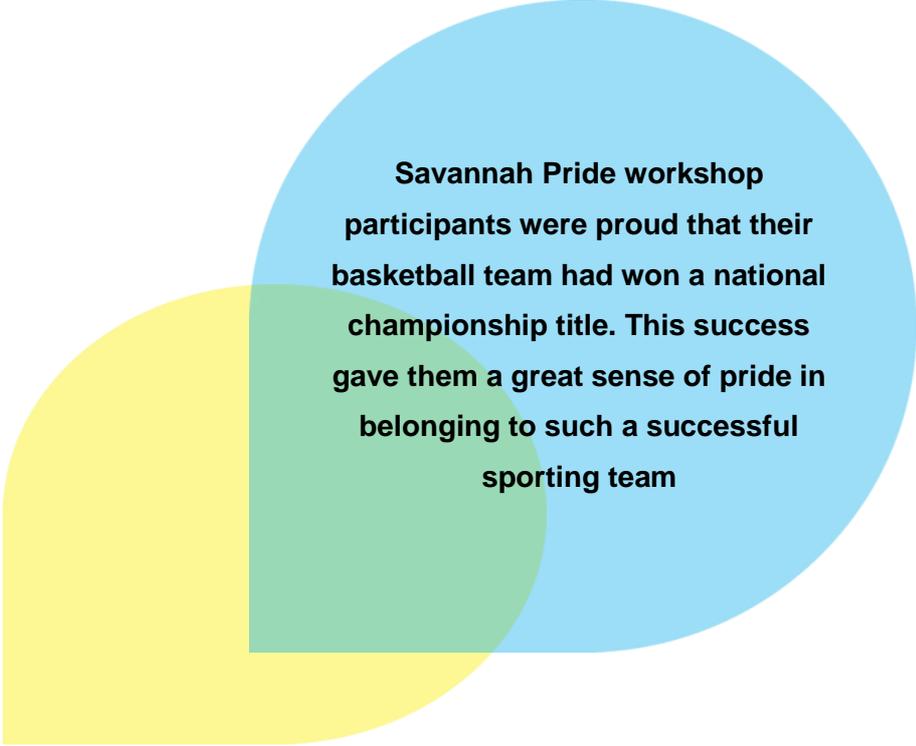
2.2 BELONGING

It is important to note that the 36 young people who participated in the creative content production workshops had been recruited through three community organisations and one

education organisation. It is not surprising then, that the participants emphasised the importance of these organisations to their developing sense of belonging, both in their local community and as Australians. The young people were extremely appreciative of the services, support and social activities organised by the organisations and the opportunity to engage with other multicultural young people. Participants talked about the comfort and support derived from living in geographical locations where there was a concentration of their ethnic communities, as well as the benefits of being able to mix with migrants and refugees from other countries and Australians through the organisations and schools they attended. A number of the young people also mentioned sport as a significant part of their lives/transition into communities. They suggested that sport in school was important because it meant they could be engaged and connected with other students without necessarily being required to speak English. By participating in sports young people did not need to be able to communicate verbally to engage with others and start to build relationships in their community. The Sudanese young men at Bankstown PCYC described the pride and belonging they experienced through playing basketball – and particularly from being very good at it. Age at arrival and length of time in country are significant variables regarding a sense of community, pride and belonging. The initial stage of transition is critical in the life of all newly arrived migrants and refugees, and one that has long-term impact. Not only do service providers, both government and nongovernment, play a vital role in providing newly arrived young people with support, but existing ethnic communities can provide a sense of continuity, a familiar language and pass on experience and knowledge about living in both the local community and in Australia more broadly. Those participants who had arrived in Australia as very young children described how they had become accustomed to an Australian way of life before they had grasped the concept of being from, or having, a home country: 'Age has made a huge difference, I think. Most of my life, and even more of my conscious life, has been in Australia'. The young people spoke variously of a sense of belonging based on both past and present experiences of inclusion and a sense of a strong and positive future: 'I take pride because Australia gave me positive future that I did not have before'.

I have a sense of belonging in Australia because I have
[a] strong and positive future.

- Survey Respondent: Male, 16, living in Australia 4 years



Savannah Pride workshop participants were proud that their basketball team had won a national championship title. This success gave them a great sense of pride in belonging to such a successful sporting team

2.3 ASPIRATIONS

Unsurprisingly, the participants shared similar aspirations with most young Australians: to 'get a secure and decent job' - in a bank, become a nurse, join the army; study at a good university; get a car; find a partner, buy a home and have a family. Many recognised that improving their English language skills would open up opportunities, emphasised that they wanted to build a life here and that they considered that their future children would be Australian. These aspirations were formed in the context of having experienced significant restrictions in both their everyday life and their imagined futures prior to coming to Australia. 'Australia has provided me with the opportunities which I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else'. They described aspirations that resulted from expanded freedom, choice and access to material improvements in their lives. This contrast between opportunities experienced before and after migration informed both a desire to contribute to society and aspiring to a life that is both different and better than before. One participant described how she wanted to get a job and be financially independent because 'that's what people do here and I couldn't do that where I came from'. Another student who grew up in refugee camp aspires to be an optometrist so that she can 'help her family and other people'.

Australia has provided me with the opportunities which I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else.

- Survey Respondent: Female, 16, living in Australia less than 1 year



One participant from the Melaleuca Refugee Centre workshop made a digital story about how the material wellbeing of his family improved since leaving the Philippines and coming to Australia. To him, this represented that that their life was better here and he had high hopes for his future

2.4 CHALLENGES

Whilst the young people who participated in this research did not recount many experiences of racism, bullying and discrimination, it would be a mistake to conclude that they had not experienced any. For the few young people who did recount experiences of playground bullying it was in relation to the period in which they first arrived at school and were unable to speak English. Even though the key questions of the research and the story prompts opened spaces for discussions of less than positive experiences, the young people chose to tell stories of everyday life and activities that signified either improved circumstances or the preoccupations of many young people – playing sport, getting a job, falling in love, getting married, having a family and so on. Overall, they emphasised the positive experiences of migration and recounted the positive experiences they had been exposed to through the

community organisation for school they attended. That is not of course to say that their lives were without challenges. Many of the young people spoke of the challenge of learning English, understanding English in school, struggling to catch-up with the curriculum and becoming language brokers for parents who didn't speak English and therefore relied on them to navigate certain systems such as health or social services. Navigating public transport and getting lost contributed to feeling uncomfortable and embarrassed, and navigating bureaucracy and the legal system around everyday activities such as learning to drive and gaining a driving license were a source of confusion and frustration. For those participants who were a little older when they arrived in Australia, the initial period of settlement and transition was difficult as they missed family members who remained back in their countries of origin. However they also stated that once they found friends and started studying that things got easier. This points to the central importance of schools as places for language learning, building friendships and integrating into their new communities and Australian society. However, for many of the new arrivals who were older, accessing education before they are permanent residents is expensive and more difficult, and this impacts on their plans for the future.

I am satisfied with the life in Australia in many ways.
Lack of sense of belonging, difficulties in accepting
cultural shock and homesick sometimes make me
frustrated every now and then.

- Survey Respondent: Male, 24, living in Australia less than 1 year

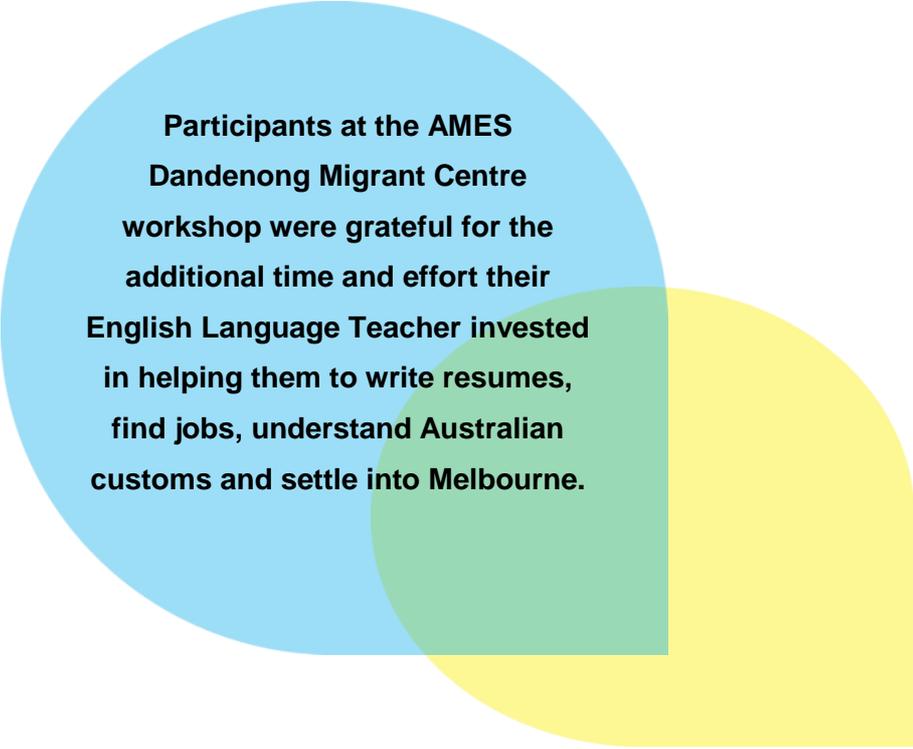
Participants frequently commented that navigating everyday life was one of the most challenging aspects of adjusting to life in Australia. Helpful professional staff and community members who explained how to negotiate things like public transport and social services helped them to better understand the everyday demands that people take for granted

2.5 EDUCATION

Clearly a key challenge for new arrivals and refugees is access to language learning, education and training that leads to a career pathway. The participants from Organisation X were concerned that they would not be able to access study assistance loans for their university or other tertiary education prior to attaining permanent residency. This has significant impacts on both the choices they can actually make and the future goals that they might set for themselves. In this way young people from a migrant or refugee background of varying ages and stages in their education trajectory are faced with both similar (e.g.: language learning) and different (e.g.: cost) issues regarding access and equity. All of the participants spoke of the significant impact that the experience of schooling and other formal and informal education opportunities had for them. School was a place of integration, of learning about the local environment and negotiating everyday routines such as catching public transport. Schools, migrant resource services and other community organisation, along with friendly neighbours, were all sources through which knowledge was built and everyday skills acquired. Overwhelmingly, the young people reported on the significance of engagement with teachers who care and are perceived as doing more than their jobs required of them, for example in helping to write a resume after school hours. Teachers who made themselves available to address needs as they arose through creative and caring support that made the young people feel valued and ‘treated as a friend, rather than as an inferior’. Some spoke of the difficulties of starting school without knowing much English – which sometimes lead to playground bullying. Further, once they had mastered English, the young people reported that they were often relied on by parents to translate and communicate at school, in everyday social interactions and in the conduct of business. This emphasises the importance of early English language learning and perhaps of an asymmetry in the provision or effectiveness of English language learning for their parents. In addition to recognition of the importance of learning about Australian culture and society, many of the older participants indicated the importance of being taught about Australian laws. Clearly, education is acquired from multiple sources and services, both formal and informal, and the more engaged young people are by the people who teach them the better their experience of integration – and the better their current wellbeing and anticipated life outcomes: ‘Comparing life to those in my home land, this life is much more comfortable and rewarding. I have attained such a better education ... I have opportunities for further study and a much more vast access to the global world’.

I'm satisfied with my life in Australia because I can get educated to make my parents proud.

- Survey Respondent: Female, 20, living in Australia 9 years



Participants at the AMES Dandenong Migrant Centre workshop were grateful for the additional time and effort their English Language Teacher invested in helping them to write resumes, find jobs, understand Australian customs and settle into Melbourne.

3 Implications and Recommendations

The project has highlighted a number of key findings regarding the health and wellbeing of young people from a migrant or refugee background in Australia. The following recommendations seek to assist young people from a migrant or refugee background as they transition into Australian communities.

3.1 Recommendation: the Australian government should continue to provide increased funding for community organisations to help young migrants and refugees (and their families) transition to life in Australia.

The Settlement Grant Program (SGP) is the federal government grant program that provides funding to organisations to help new arrivals in Australia. In the 2015-16 Budget, the government increased SGP funding by \$7.4 million. However, funding for supervision and welfare for unaccompanied humanitarian minors was reduced by \$3.2 million; this is expected to drop to only \$3.9 million in 2016-17. The participants noted the importance of community organisations in nurturing their sense of belonging to their local community and Australia more generally. They particularly valued the support services and social activities of their community organisations. They enjoyed the social support of interacting with people from their own ethnic community, with others from other ethnic communities as well.

3.2 Recommendation: the Australian government should include funding for sports organisations and/or sports activities in schools and community organisations as a way to help young migrants and refugees increase their sense of belonging and connectedness.

Sport and recreation could be included into SGP funding, as they are not specifically mentioned currently. Alternatively, the government could consider targeting funding to specific sporting activities that garner interest from community organisations or schools. Sport was mentioned often by the participants as a way to connect with their peers in school and/or the community. Given that some young people did not feel confident in their language ability, playing sport was a way to get to know their peers and start to build to build relationships and friendships. Being part of a sports team can also give young people a sense of pride and belonging.

3.3 Recommendation: Adult Migration English Program (AMEP) language training hours should be extended to ensure adequate training for all cohorts of migrants and refugees, as

well as more opportunities for migrants and refugees to improve their workplace English skills.

The AMEP is a federally-funded program that provides 510 hours of English language classes for newly arrived migrants and refugees, and is accessible to all newly arrived people. However, there is no support beyond the initial 510 hours, and it is often cited as not including enough workplace specific language training. The young people recognised that improving their English language skills would increase their opportunities for employment and a better life in Australia. Many of the participants spoke of the challenges of understanding and learning English in school, which affected their schooling as they were unable to keep up with their schoolwork. Thus, schools are a natural hub where young people can develop their English language skills. For those who are no longer in school, there should be alternative ways in which they can access English language courses (e.g., TAFE).

3.4 Recommendation: The Australian Government should provide young migrants and refugees increased access to education and training that leads to a career pathway, such as subsidies for more vocational training courses and tertiary courses for humanitarian entrants (e.g., Smart and Skilled program in NSW which subsidises vocational training up to an including Certificate III and higher in some instances).

The Department of Education and Training has a Skills for Education and Employment Program which offers 800 hours of training in language, literacy and numeracy to eligible job seekers. However, many migrants and refugees are unable to access this course because they do not pass the required levels of English. Young migrants and refugees enter Australia on a variety of visas, which can have a number of implications on their schooling and career trajectories. Those not on a permanent residency visa cannot access HELP for their tertiary education, which would affect their future career prospects. What became clear from the participant experiences was that young migrants and refugees of all ages faced similar and different issues regarding access and equity to education and training.

3.5 Recommendation: The Australian Government could extent SGP funding to support increased education opportunities through multiple sources and services, both formal and informal, to young migrants and refugees and their families to build everyday skills.

SGP funding could be extended to support a wider variety of organisations and local groups. The young people mentioned schools, migrant resource services, other community organisations, friendly neighbours, and specific teachers who were important sources of knowledge that helped them develop their everyday skills in transitioning to life in Australia. The most frequent source of help was a teacher at their school who cared about them, and helped them write their resume after school hours, for example. Since school was a significant place of integration, they were able to learn about the local environment and were able to learn about negotiating everyday routines such as catching public transport. While everyday skills such as catching public transport may seem to be a minor issue, it can cause a significant source of distress for these young people who are trying to manage starting a new life in a new country.

4 Conclusion

This study has provided some important insights into the experiences of young newly-arrived migrants and refugees in Australia, using digital storytelling practices to capture settlement experiences and social cohesion. Many young migrants and refugees face a number of difficult challenges associated with adjusting to a new social and cultural environment, while simultaneously negotiating a path into adulthood. These unique experiences, coupled with the fact that an increasing number of those arriving in Australia are young people under the age of 25 (Department of Social Services, 2015), reflects a need to understand the experiences of this growing group and to address the challenges they face as they transition into Australian life.

What became apparent during the conduct of this research is that researching migrants and refugees, and in particular young migrants and refugees, is fraught with difficulties and challenges such as language barriers and cross-cultural translations for the online survey through to the practical issues of negotiating with community organisation gatekeepers. A key methodological challenge of developing an appropriate research approach is the difficulty associated with eliciting information from a population with a wide range of literacy skills and languages, and who have a diversity of pre-arrival experiences. For migrants and refugees who have been in Australia longer, and who have stronger English skills, an online survey would be suitable. However, for those with less advanced literacy skills, alternative approaches would be more suitable, such as the digital storytelling approach. In addition, the importance of establishing trust between researchers and migrant/refugee communities and community organisations was absolutely critical. This led to an increasing recognition of the value of participatory approaches focused on research *with* rather than *on* migrant and refugee communities. The digital storytelling approach taken in this study addresses this question of participatory research with young people rather than on them. Future studies should consider utilising a digital storytelling approach for use in collaboration with young people from a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

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