

How does the spatial experience enhance student belonging in art college spaces?

Asuf Ishaq- 19th January 2024



I teach on the second year BA Fine Art Drawing course at Camberwell College of Art. My research is centred around my students experience of relocation from the main Camberwell campus studios to a new studio spaces at Wilson Road, which is 8 minutes walk away.

I am interested in exploring the relationship with architecture interior spaces and students sense of belonging and comfort in their spaces of learning, from studio spaces, workshops, lecturer theatre study spaces and a connection with community through social spaces and exhibitions.

Not all students have a personal studio space, which often means students work at home attend tutorials and crits with works on a mobile device.

Physical work is important for art making and sharing with staff and peers, together view and experience scale, materials textures and colours. It is important for all students to fully feel part of their creative community and spend time together on campus.

## Research

- **Paul, A, M. (2021) The Extended Mind: The Power of Thinking Outside the Brain**  
Annie Murphy Paul discuss thinking with our sensations, movement and gestures and thinking with our surrounds such as Built spaces and ambience.
- **Wong, B. (2023) Exploring the spatial belonging of students in higher education, Studies in Higher Education** discuss the role of spatial factors in shaping student belonging.
- **Corazzo, J. (2022) Studio through studio: A diffractive reading of the educational design studio.** This research is centred around the student studio and important role of the studio for student learning and experience with peers and privacy to make work.

Audio recordings, then made into transcripts with Otter App.

- Focus Group interviews with 2 students, for 2.5 hours and a buildings tour
- Interview with student 3 for 1hr on Teams
- Survey Microsoft forms, 7 students participated
- Photographs of spaces

# Transcripts of focus group with two students

## 27 November 2023

01a

Mon, Jan 15, 2024 12:12PM • 23:53

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

studio, people, space, building, work, belonging, feel, home, year, uni, art, school, college, interesting, place, designed, takes, history, mentioned, experience

### SPEAKERS

Asuf ISHAQ, Student 2, Student 1

#### Asuf ISHAQ 00:04

So the mic is on now. That's working fine. So what I'll do for the volume, okay, so I'll start with so belonging to university, what does that mean? I mean, I use the word University, and sometimes I use the word college or college. So, I mean, maybe there has like, some sort of importance, but I mix it up. So it's useful for them. So to explain, so what? What is belonging to the university space? What does belonging mean to you? Does the building does the building enhance your sense of belonging? Can I build? And also can a building do this? So you want to just do you want to start off? Or you can start? How does a building? I mean, we normally think, Okay, what do we think of belonging? belonging? What, what does belonging mean to you?

#### Student 1 01:23

Not really sure, because I've, I'm someone that's never felt like I belong, anywhere. I've always had the kind of opposite experience where I feel like I don't belong, and I'm always slightly on the outsides of things. Yeah, I think it's really wide, very affected by spaces and my surroundings is like, it's more the physical side, that makes me more like I belong somewhere than the kind of like, non physical aspects of it.

#### Asuf ISHAQ 21:44

Interesting. You say something about being what scared or of universe or intimidated by you, but it was the word used. The the Is it scary?

#### Student 2 21:59

Yeah. I think Yeah. At and, and also, because this is like a prestigious art school. And also, I don't think there's a lot of younger, like, really young people here because the other unit was like, everyone was 18. Yeah. And I was 22 When I started, and it was a bit like, people were saying I was old. I've never been. But then here I feel like there's like a real range of people.

#### Asuf ISHAQ 22:26

Yeah. It's interesting. It's the reputation or the, you know, feeling a little bit hesitant or feeling this. This pressure, you know, going to a place with you assume it's, you know, as disruptive. No exclusive or good reputation. Yeah, that's a really, that's really interesting, I think. What about the building that I mean, the building itself? Is that intimidating. The other one? Oh, yeah. Yeah, go anywhere? I think.

#### Student 2 23:02

So. No, I'm trying to remember how I felt like when I first arrived. I don't think I was, it was the building welcoming. Yeah, I'd say it was a bit like there's a lot of it, I guess. So. I remember when we did like a tour, I was like, Christ like this. Never gonna remember like, where everything is. But I really liked the building we were in last year because it was kind of the older building. I thought that was really cool. And like the architecture, and I felt like there's a history of artists that have been here and that's really cool. Yeah, but I think it was intimidating. But I don't know if it's because of the building. It's just because it's, I'm quite an anxious person. And it's like going into a new situation. Yeah, those new people is always going to be quite scary to me. Yeah. So you

# Transcripts of focus group with two students

## 27 November 2023

|  
01b

Mon, Jan 15, 2024 1:05PM • 13:59

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, studio, year, work, anxious, space, rooms, building, workshop, student, accommodating, struggled, painting, interesting, exhibitions, technician, opposed, carpeted floors, belonging, [feeling](#)

### SPEAKERS

Student 1, [Asuf ISHAQ](#), Student 2

#### [Asuf ISHAQ 00:00](#)

Nothing, I think people probably would have a similar kind of feeling, especially if the reputation is so much and, and there's a lot of [workload](#) and lots of kind of things, you know, having credits and, you know, doing things, which are. I mean, you've had credits before. But then I suppose you had you feel bad credits. I mean, it's going off topic, but

#### [Student 2 00:30](#)

I always am anxious about them, just because yeah, showing my work is quite scary. But then they're always kind of quite good experiences. I think it depends. There are there were [definitely times](#) more in first year where like, everyone was sat in silence. And it was quite awkward. But like, now it's quite I like getting feedback from people. And I usually come out of a crit with a new idea or [Yeah](#), so I think they're good. We haven't. I think we've had as much this [year](#)

#### [Student 1 00:59](#)

when we had the little kind of [pop up](#) exhibition.

#### [Student 1 10:08](#)

Yeah, exactly. Because it's nice. Once you feel like you've got to know something, you've made it your own, you can kind of keep going backwards. This year, we've got this change, which is it's taken me kind of three, four months, we even get to the point of accepting it. Yeah. And then next year, I'm so kind of preoccupied with worrying about what's happening that, that I can't even kind of enjoy. Yeah.

#### [Student 2 10:29](#)

What's happening? And I think it's kind of, because like I said, in my [uni](#) before, where we were put in a space at the start of the year, and we were that well, we're even just like, last year, we started off in one studio, then we're in another, which was fine and everything, but it's just kind of like, I would have, I would have thought you'd have like a space. But it feels very like that always having to figure out where to put us. Like why don't we just have a space? Yeah.

#### [Student 1 10:55](#)

Yeah, yeah, it makes sense. I mean, that's kind of the issue with universities. I feel like you're treated a lot more as like just a thing that just gets moved around, as opposed to

#### [Asuf ISHAQ 11:04](#)

Yeah, yeah. No, yeah. That's, I mean, I think that's, that's [a really interesting point](#), actually. Another question, which I forgot. So [So](#) do you feel you have access to all the building spaces, like making work [socialising](#), exhibiting work, and study [study spots](#)? Like, you know, the library and but the [space](#)? Do you feel? You've, you have access to that? And you use that?

#### [Student 1 11:37](#)

Yeah, I mean, I quite again, even when I started on representing very actively got inducted to every single workshop. Yeah, within like, the first month, because it was very important to me that I had the freedom and the ability to just go as and when I wanted to. Yeah, so it does. I mean, I think that's the one advantage of particularly [Camberwell](#) is that, I know, like at CSM, you don't have access to certain facilities, unless you're like on a specific course, or something, it can work. It's quite nice, because we

# Transcript of Teams interview with third student 1 December 2023

## Research interview with Asuf I...31201\_120913-Meeting Recording

Mon, Jan 15, 2024 1:42PM • 41:43

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

space, belonging, workshop, studio, students, work, building, experience, lecture, bit, people, college, exhibition spaces, wilson, tables, art, improved, talk, personally, peckham

### SPEAKERS

Student 3, Asuf ISHAQ

#### Asuf ISHAQ 00:02

That's fine. That's perfect. I know, I didn't realise you had that. Oh, just the transcription as well. Oh, that's good. Yeah. In the chat. Okay, so that will help me. Maybe I should use the teams more, because I use another AI programme to do the transcription. Right. This is this is actually quite useful. Okay, so I'll begin then. So I have, I have a set of questions. And I think if you don't have it have any more questions about the, my research? Then I can start the questions. Okay, so yeah, I just wanted to say, you know, you can answer, honestly as you want, because it's, it's not, your name won't be shown anywhere, there'll be anonymous. And, and also, you know, it's up to you what you feel comfortable telling. So just, you know, as long as you're comfortable. So, so the question of belonging to the art college or the university spaces. I just wanted to ask you for about 10 minutes or so on this question. So. So what do you what do you think a belonging means and in the context of a building space, but also you can elaborate on what belonging means to you.

#### Student 3 01:50

I think it could be two thoughts. One is the longing with human connection. So having a studio space, even though I don't use it very often, because I use the kitchen in my house as my studio. Yeah, like, you know, family commitment. So I finished school, quickly, go home, pick up my children and, and what a home at nighttime. So I don't go to actually use the studio space a lot to create work. But I do appreciate a lot having a studio space with other creatives together. I love going in there looking at their work, talk about their work is the conversations and learn about each other's interest. And you know, a lot of time you get inspiration from other artists by talking about their work and your work. And also listen, to listen to your own thoughts as well. That's really helpful in terms of reflecting on your own work. So I find that definitely create a sense of belonging if you have a shared studio space. And the second point, I suppose it's having a workshop, if you like, that you feel allow you to create with the mediums that you really love, for example, in my case, it's ceramic workshop. So whenever I have a chance, always, by default, will be in the ceramic workshop. Yeah. That makes me feel a strong sense of belonging because I'm able to, to create the world the way I want to create. So it's not necessarily

#### Asuf ISHAQ 14:15

I'd like you to think a little bit more about different kinds of spaces, because of my research is about how spaces interact, or which which enables peoples to, to kind of mix or come across like, like,

#### Student 3 14:32

I do think actually thinking about it, a small share space that you can kind of put out work and talk about things among artists is quite good because the only place we've got is the studio space, which is a lot of space because normally the tables already covered with work. Yeah. But let's say because of this group project, we a lot of time just use the canteen space, but by 12 o'clock it's for people starting to come in eat and you won't be able to have any space. I think having some common space that you can actually just sit around as a group is quite helpful. I don't think there's a lot of that other than.

#### Asuf ISHAQ 15:14

Yeah, true. So something like a common room or somewhere where you it's kind of more, maybe, you know, maybe there's some music in there, or sofas or like, somewhere you can play games or something. But I don't know, I'm just kind of thinking aloud. Yeah.

#### Student 3 15:35

Like, there's some space that was tables and chairs and yeah, a piano, for example.

#### Asuf ISHAQ 15:42

Yeah. They said, like, also a student union that you've ever gone to some event for a Student Union?

#### Student 3 15:49

I haven't because usually is at night, and I put my children's to sleep. And then I don't go, Yeah, I'll go out at night. So I don't have I don't really want to have a nanny or anything like that. Anytime I could show show is to the daytime, but there was no nothing organised for daytime. So yeah. So don't really go to any of that guy. But I do I do catch up with some of my friends from Union, I organise my own things with them by going to the exhibitions together. And yeah, I think having like trips together is also quite helpful. That data, a sense of belongings, because you, yeah, you visit something together, and you talk about them together. Yeah.

## Transcripts of focus group with two students

27 November 2023

Asuf ISHAQ 04:13

Is it too noisy in the studio?

**Student 1** 04:21

Yeah, I think, again, the setup last place suited me because my section was very much my section. And it was like, I could kind of choose when to go around people's studios and chat to people and when to just revert back to my little space. Yeah, which I think suited me quite well, because it's, it's like you've got your place and you can decide when to go and move to someone else's space to talk to them. Whereas no one ever really imposed on mine. It was quite a personal bubble that I had set up.





Modular Building Wilson Road campus

“Studios tend to be shielded from the public. Levels of privacy are required to focus activities, but also because the visual nature of practices means others can witness creative activities. This exposure, or the threat of exposure, during a creative act, feels potentially fraught and may attract unwanted or premature critique”

Corazzo, J. (2022) Studio through studio: A diffractive reading of the educational design studio







## Transcripts of focus group with two students

27 November 2023

**Asuf ISHAQ** 06:56

Do you have a space?

**Student 2** 07:18

Yeah, I don't have like a set space because I'm not in a lot. So I don't feel like I should really have one that no one else can touch. But I do have a table kind of like an area where people I know are and I could probably go sit there. If I came in? The I don't have like, I don't have work up or anything. So. Okay. I don't like have.

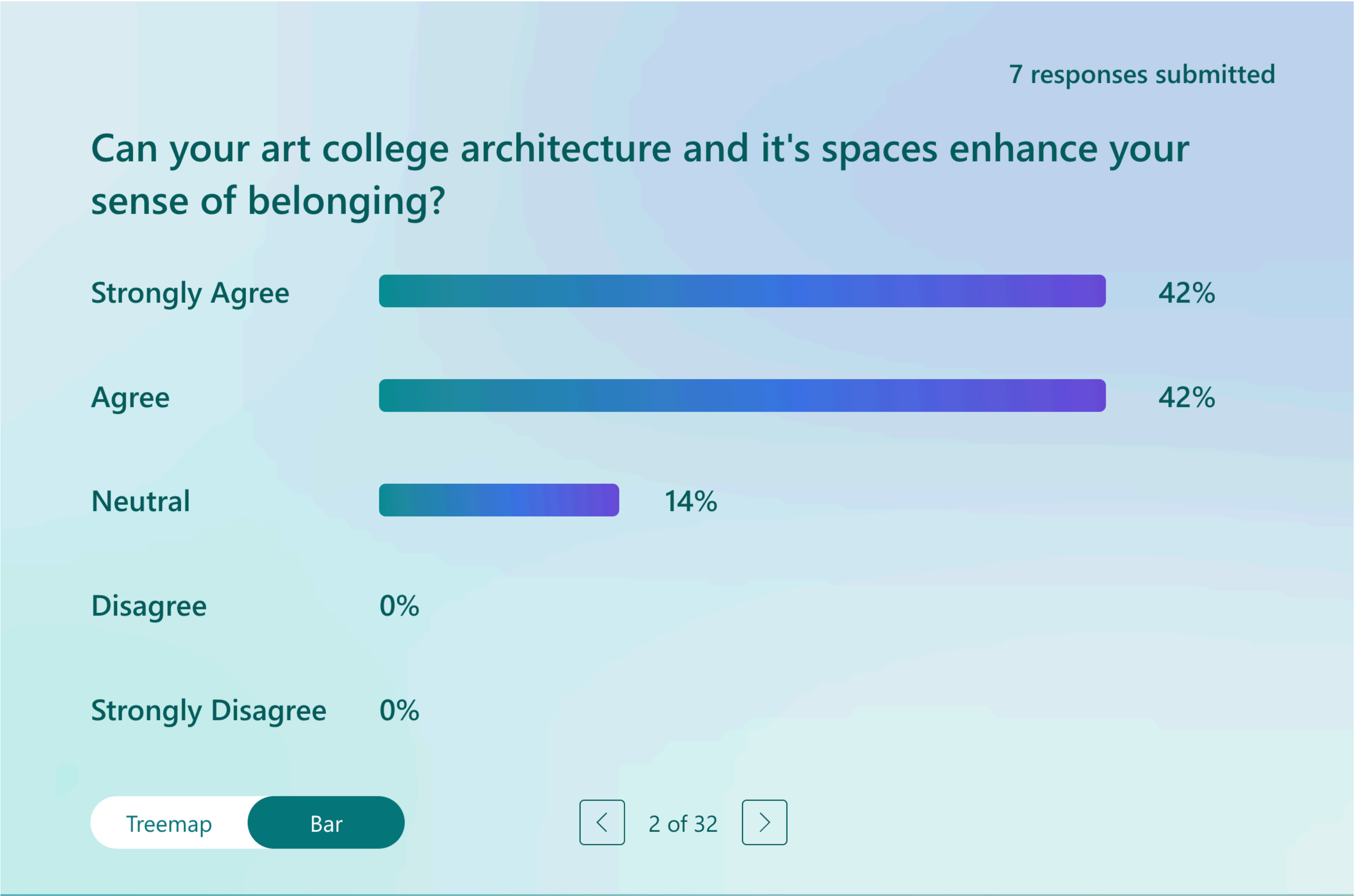
“For example, Carnell ([2017](#)) found that students’ familiarity with particular spaces was central to their development of emotional attachment and a sense of community, belonging and togetherness. According to Mulrooney and Kelly ([2020](#)), the theme of belonging, particularly the feeling of being ‘at home’, is one of the most significant aspects of student perceptions of the university campus. The authors argued that students’ relationship with physical spaces on campus are primarily emotional, which influences their feelings of belonging. In other words, the lived experiences of physical space are intimately connected to feelings, emotions and social relationships, shaping how students feel or have felt in specific spaces and localities (Finn and Holton [2019](#)).”

Wong, B. (2023) Exploring the spatial belonging of students in higher education, Studies in Higher Education

“Ambient belonging” defined as individuals’ sense of fit with the physical environment, along with a sense of fit with the people who are imagined to occupy that environment”

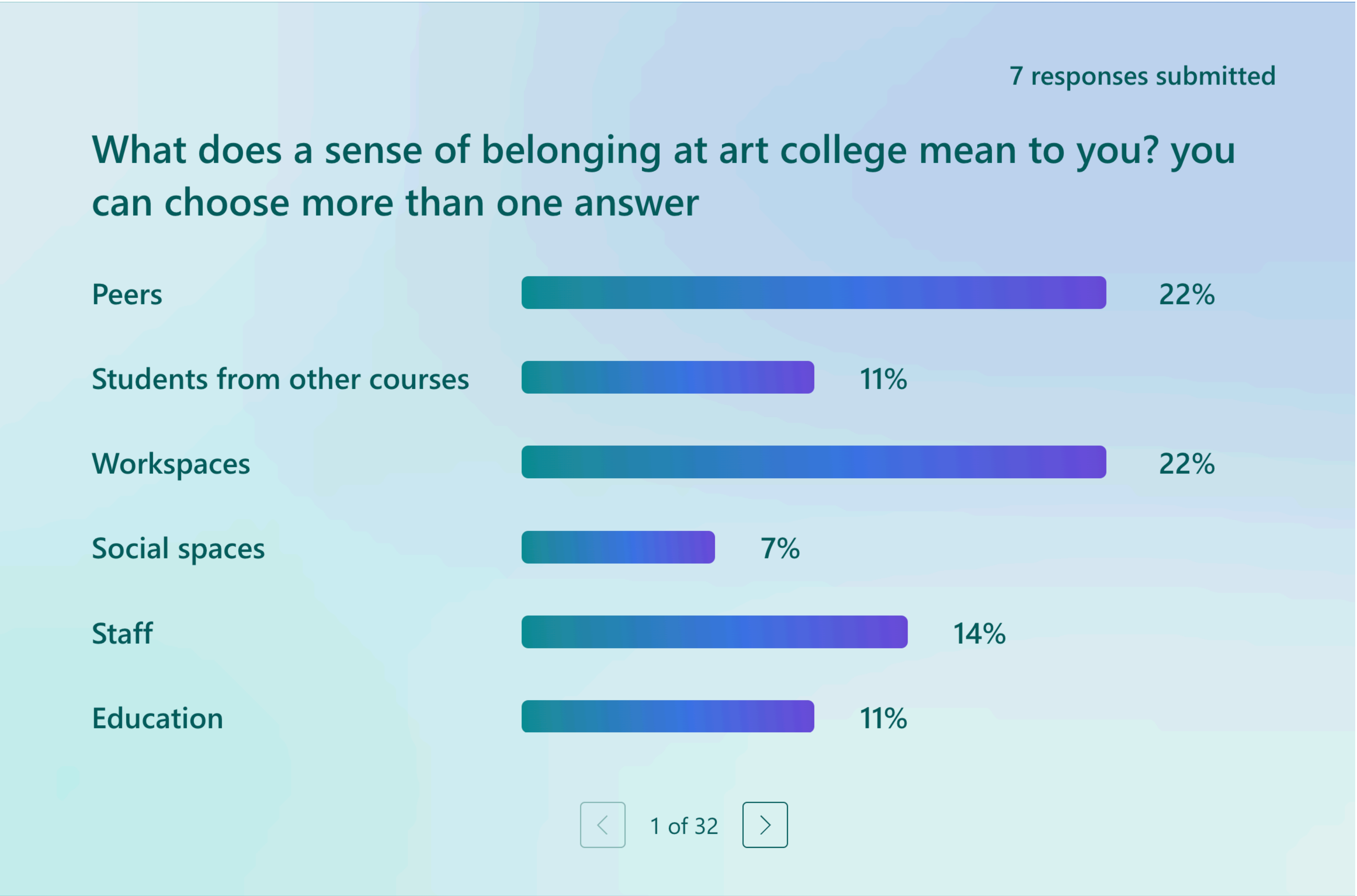
(Cheryan, 2009, as cited in Paul, 2021, p.134-135)

Survey Microsoft forms, 7 students participated  
9 January 2024



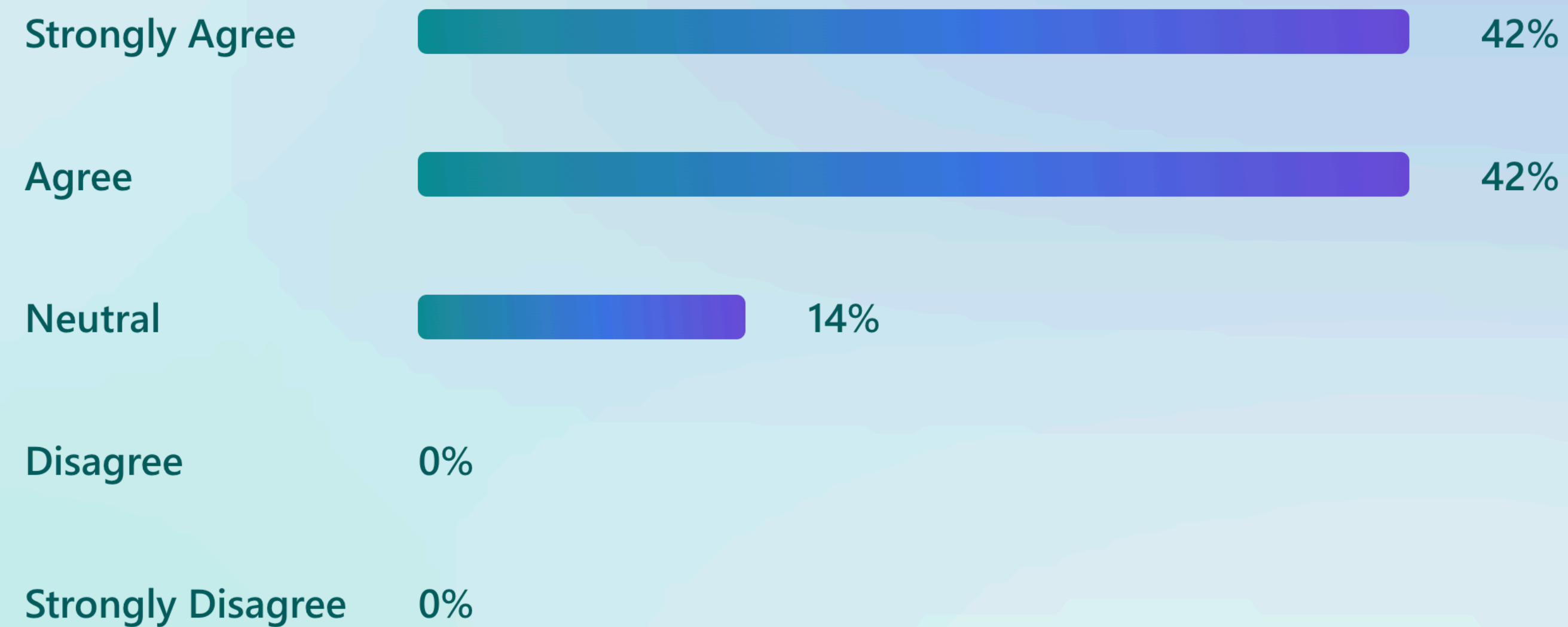
Digital Questionnaire on Microsoft forms

7 students participated



7 responses submitted

## Can your art college architecture and it's spaces enhance your sense of belonging?



Treemap

Bar

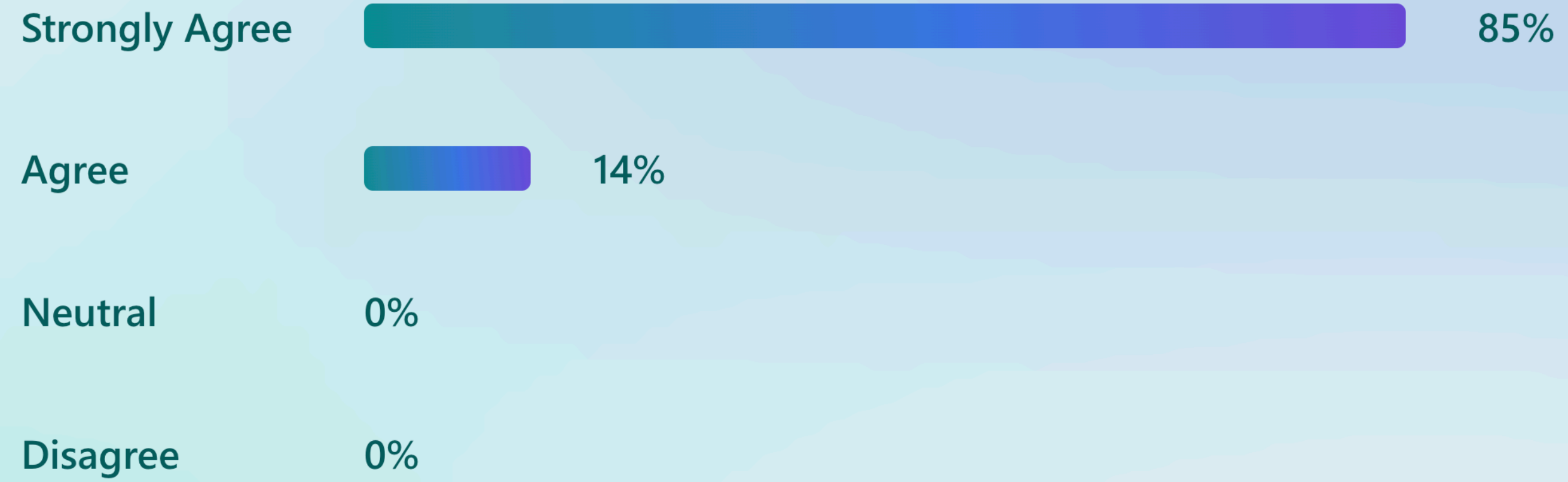


2 of 32



7 responses submitted

## Individual fixed Studio space is important.



Treemap

Bar



12 of 32



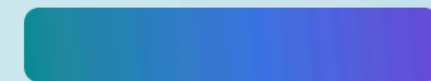
7 responses submitted

Art college building needs to be old, to feel connected to its history and reputation.

Strongly Agree

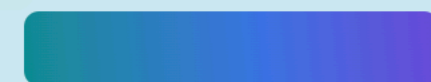
0%

Agree



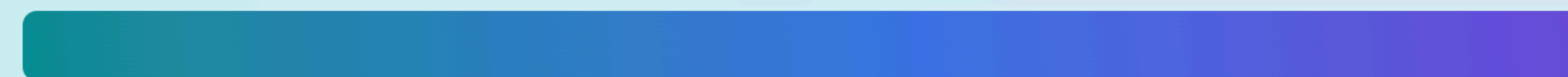
14%

Neutral



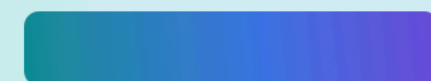
14%

Disagree



57%

Strongly Disagree



14%

Treemap

Bar



3 of 32



7 responses submitted

Main Camberwell campus is a mix of old and new architecture,  
what is your experience of this space?

sense of history modern world  
personally really like ceilings walls industrial  
concrete architecture architecture in areas  
new architecture **building** architecture is nice  
walls and tiles high ceilings  
old building old architecture good space  
old part of the college architecture and the sense  
canteen and library incredibly drawn areas such as the canteen

Wordcloud

All responses



4 of 32



7 responses submitted

The spatial ambience in the Camberwell campus is beneficial to my experience.

Strongly Agree 28%

Agree 57%

Neutral 0%

Disagree 14%

Strongly Disagree 0%

Treemap Bar

7 responses submitted

# Connecting with students from other courses in communal spaces is important

Strongly Agree 14%

Agree 85%

Neutral 0%

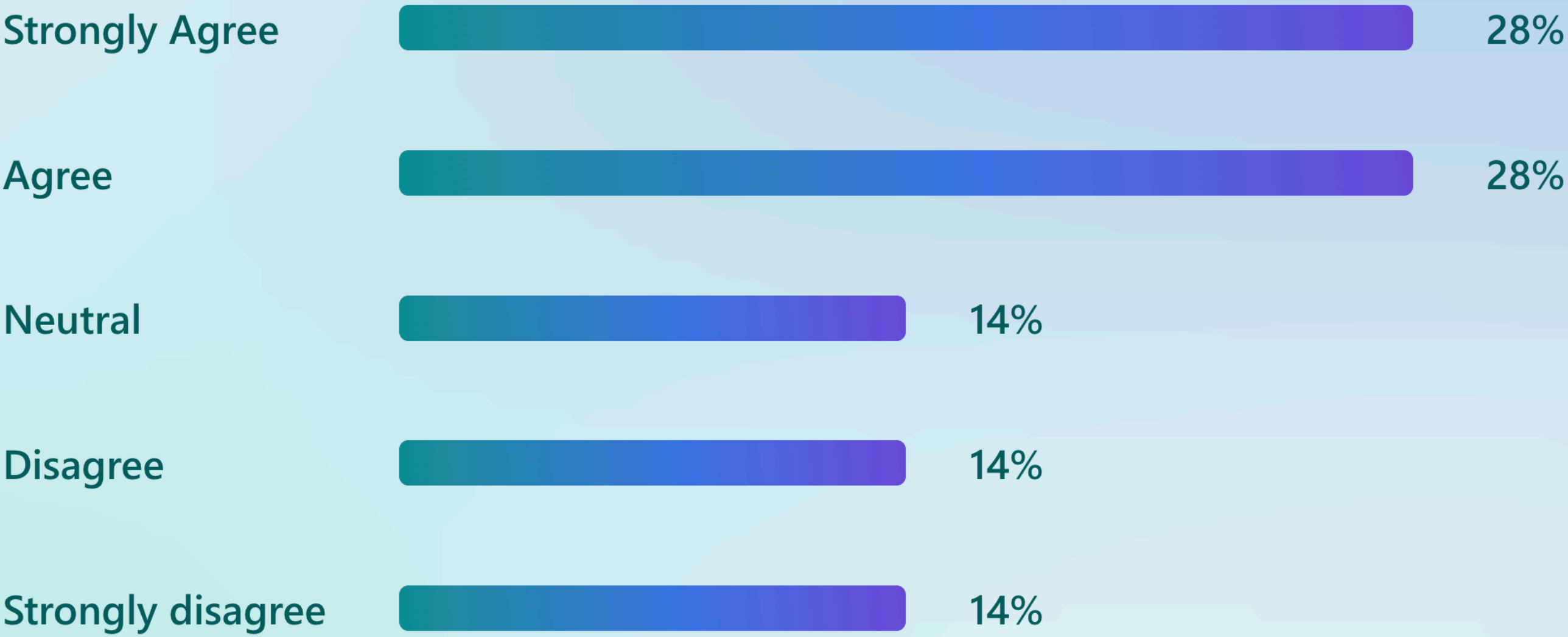
Disagree 0%

Treemap

Bar

7 responses submitted

Working from home or another space outside the college works for me.

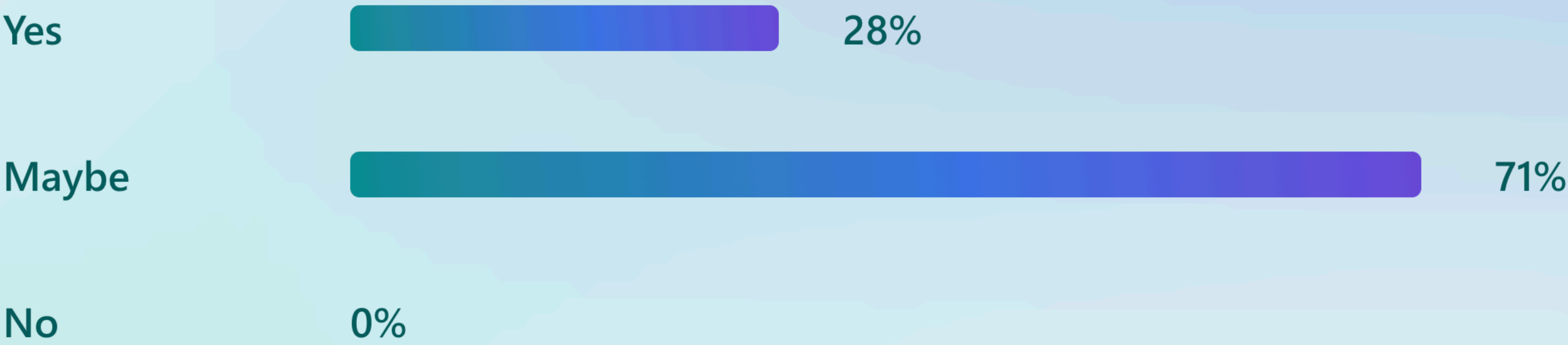


Treemap

Bar

7 responses submitted

# Creative Studio with ambient noise is important.



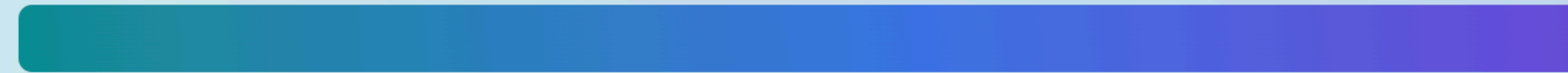
Treemap

Bar

7 responses submitted

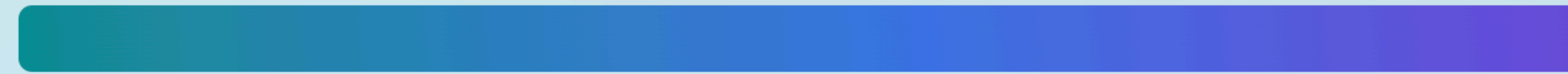
Studio spaces should be a quiet spaces for working.

Yes



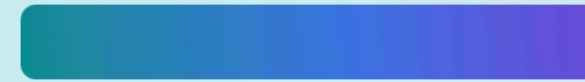
42%

Maybe



42%

No



14%

Treemap

Bar



16 of 32



## 23. What can be improved in your current studio space?

7 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1		The current studio space is unbearable and not conducive to producing work and being a space to spend time within and around other creatives. It is a temporary structure with a surgical appearance and impersonality to it, with harsh lighting, walls we can't hang things on, terrible acoustics so the moment two people talk across the building you can't focus, no natural light, freezing and stuffy, and a 20 minute round trip away from the campus and its facilities and the other courses ... It could be improved by ceasing to exist.
2		again, i think i'm the issue, not the space.
3		i just enjoy the old studio space much more. the higher ceilings and huge windows had much more character
4		It needs a communal space and kitchen, and heating.
5	anonymous	Have a larger space
6	anonymous	I don't currently use the studio space consistently because I have family commitment so I mainly work/create from home or workshops. Currently there is no shared hot desk and wall for artists who uses the studio on an ad hoc basis. It would be very helpful to have these in the near future.
7	anonvmous	There is not enough space for everyone



32. Which are your favourite places anywhere in the college and how does it make you feel?

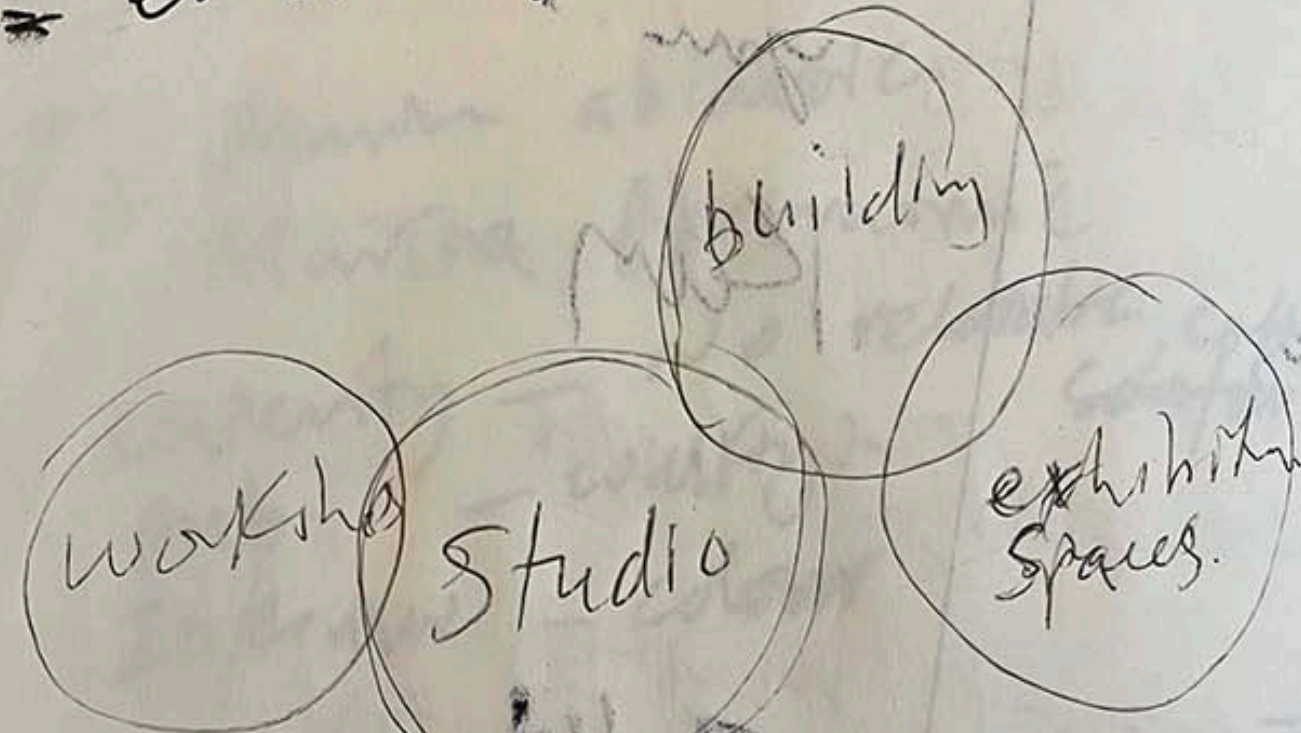
6 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1		Letterpress and the darkrooms on main campus, I find them very peaceful and therapeutic spaces to focus on a singular individual physical analogue process at hand
2		the canteen and library
3		i like the studios but wish they were closer to the actual campus
4		I like the canteen, it is a nice space aesthetically and it's a place where all student/tutors go, so it feels very connected.
5	anonymous	I don't have a favourite space
6	anonymous	Ceramic workshops and the studio. I love these creative spaces and the opportunities to discuss art with other artists.

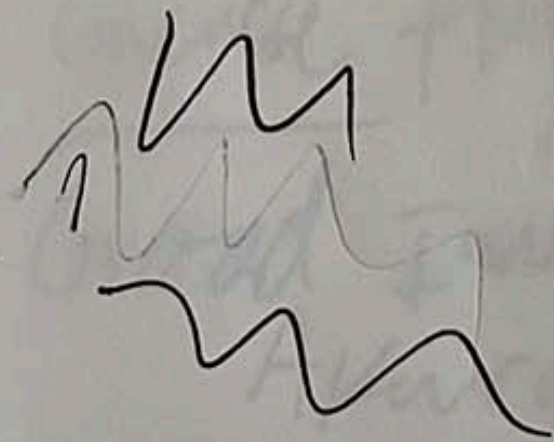
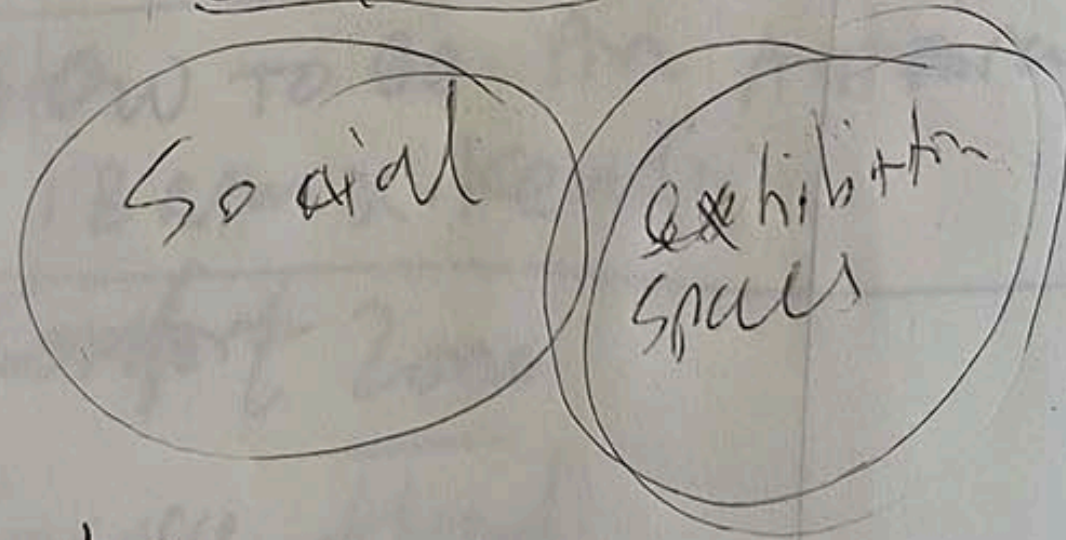
Planning, notes  
14 November 2023

1/2023 Social  
~~so~~

- Function
- emotions / sense ~~feel~~



Communal



Art College build  
Function - does it do what  
need to do?  
Feel emotion - spaces that not  
you feel:

studios

- private closed off?
- semi closed off
- open shared spaces?

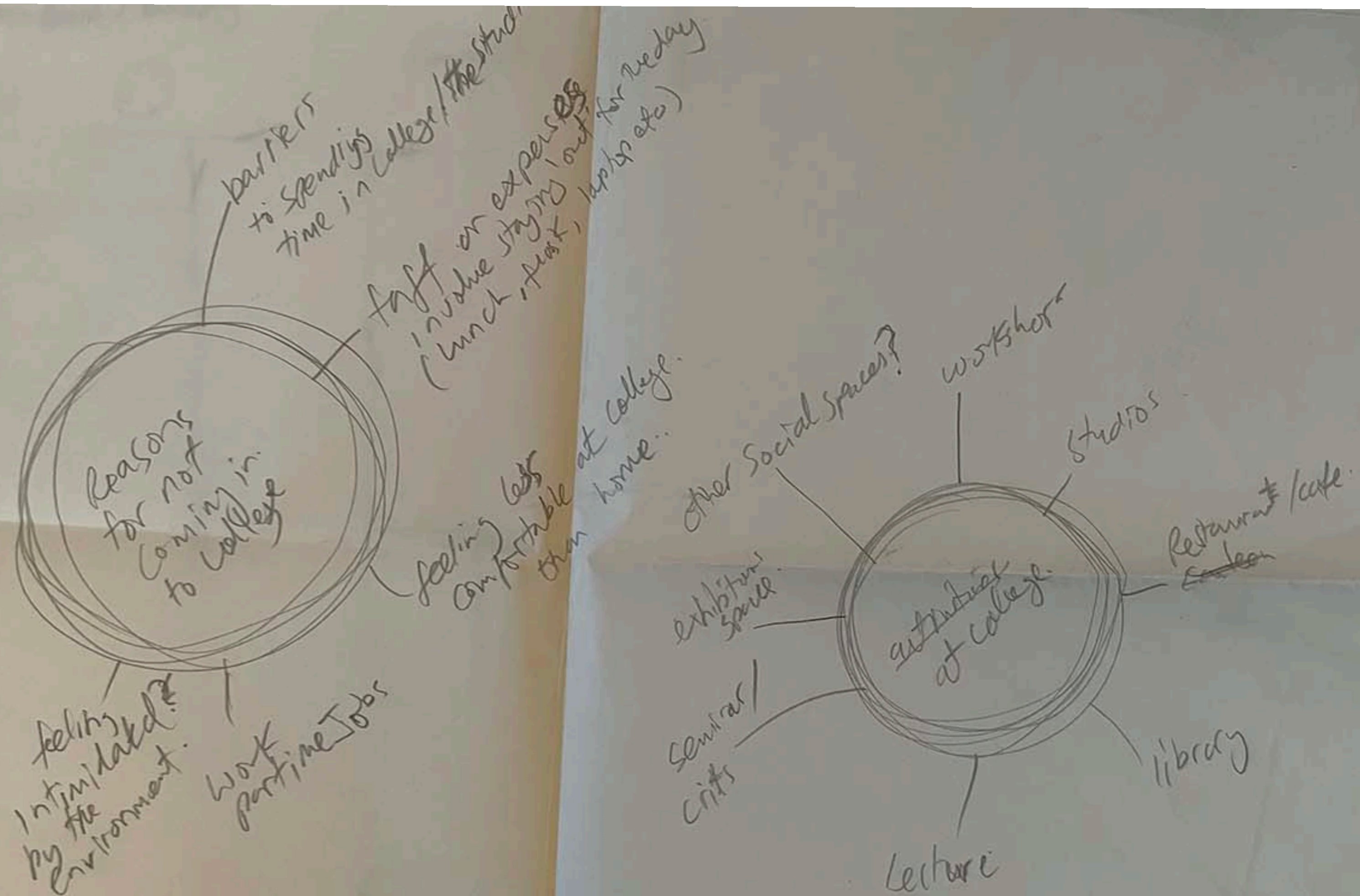
workshops

social  
communal spaces

communal exhibition  
spaces

- boundary making
- ~~paths~~ of A desire path  
paths made by human traffic
- counter spaces within  
the university

Notes  
5 November 2023



creative  
ideas of important studies  
ideas of rest of space  
viewing work or duties.

## Interviews results

- Spatial experience is connected to emotion, feeling and mood, this provides the sense of belonging
- The importance of an art college campus as place of comfort with personal working space.
- Almost all students were unsatisfied with their new studio spaces, with low ceilings, bad lights and office feel compared to the Victorian high ceiling and large windows.
- After the pandemic there is a greater need for college campus to be as place of comfort.
- Some students are happy to work from home, belonging and connecting is a much more complex subject.
- Most felt happy in social spaces such as the cafe and library. They thought the cafe/restaurant is well designed and welcoming
- Most student enjoyed the workshop ambient

## References

Paul, A, M. (2021) The Extended Mind: The Power of Thinking Outside the Brain

Wong, B. (2023) Exploring the spatial belonging of students in higher education, Studies in Higher Education

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Helen Kara on Arts-Based methods

Gray, C. and Malins, J. (2004) *Visualizing Research: A guide to the research process in art and design*.

(Cheryan, 2009, as cited in Paul, 2021, p.134-135)







