The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education

cambridge.org/jie

Research Article

Cite this article: Shay M (2021). Extending the yarning yarn: Collaborative Yarning Methodology for ethical Indigenist education research. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* **50**, 62–70. https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2018.25

Received: 19 June 2018
Revised: 8 October 2018
Accepted: 12 November 2018
First published online: 4 February 2019

Key words:
Aboriginal education; Indigenist research; methodology; yarning

Author for correspondence:
Marnee Shay, E-mail: m.shay@uq.edu.au

Extending the yarning yarn: Collaborative Yarning Methodology for ethical Indigenist education research

Marnee Shay

School of Education, The University of Queensland, St Lucia 4072, Australia

Abstract

Yarning scholarship is emerging in the Australian context. There are a growing number of Indigenous scholars who advocate for using yarning in research and this paper aims to contribute to this methodological discussion. In this paper, I outline the development of a methodology, which I have named Collaborative Yarning Methodology (CYM). CYM extends on the current yarning scholarship available to researchers through critically addressing the issue of data collection and analysis. The methodology was developed in undertaking my doctoral study in alternative school settings. In developing CYM, I discuss and analyse the implications of using Indigenous methodologies in institutionalised education settings and some of issues that may arise, and some explicitly for Indigenous researchers. Through analysing the current discourses that exists when undertaking Indigenous-focused research in education institutions, there are clearly connections in how Indigenous people are positioned politically, racially and socially when assuming the role of a researcher. I propose that in Indigenous education focused research, there continues to be an over-reliance of positivist ways of collecting yarning data, such as audio recording. I offer an alternative to audio recording, which incorporates collaborative approaches to data collection with participants underpinned by the principle of self-determination.

Introduction

Indigenous education and improving educational outcomes for Indigenous young people worldwide is a priority for many colonised countries (Jacob *et al.*, 2015). As Indigenous scholars globally were historically excluded from knowledge production about us, Indigenous methodological and theoretical scholarship is vital in decolonising knowledge and shifting our position from the observed to the researcher (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). For Western researchers, there is an abundance of scholarship on a broad range of methodological and theoretical frameworks, centred around Western epistemes and paradigms. For Indigenous researchers, there is often limited literature to draw from when conceptualising our research.

In this paper, I will outline the development of an Indigenist research methodology, which emerged through undertaking my doctoral study. My PhD research explored the educative roles that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are undertaking in a context called flexi schools, or otherwise known as alternative schools in the literature. As my study focused on the stories and experiences of Indigenous Australians within this specific educational context, it required that my conceptual and methodological approach have deep ethical considerations for both the group I was working with and the implications of my position as an Aboriginal researcher.

In undertaking such reflections, I developed a methodology that I have named *Collaborative Yarning Methodology* (CYM), which extends on the existing yarning methodology literature (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010; Dean, 2010; Fredericks *et al.*, 2011; Wain *et al.*, 2016) and is theoretically grounded in Indigenist research theoretical principles (Rigney, 2006). In developing this methodology, I analysed the discourses within the institutional context in which this education research took place (Shay, 2016); the underlying epistemes and ontologies that frame this approach and challenged the over-reliance of audio-recording as a tool for data collection. While yarning is a specific cultural process articulated by Indigenous Australians, the concept of story as a way of sharing knowledge and a process has been written about by First Nations scholars globally for some time now (Archibald, 2008; Denzin *et al.*, 2008; Mucina, 2011). It is imperative that diverse cultural positions and approaches to research be included in education, and indeed, all fields of research scholarship because it assists in expanding the current knowledge base from problematising and othering cultural minorities to seeing and understanding complex problems from the position of the cultural other.

© The Author(s) 2019

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Use of yarning in research: background

Yarning is an English language term that means thread, used to sew with. An old sailor's expression, to spin a yarn reportedly originating from the 19th century meant that yarn in the English language was also understood to mean telling a tale or spinning story or tale (O'Conner and Kellerman, 2015). It is not documented how Indigenous people in Australia took up this term and created another meaning from the same term. However, I have asked my elders who have said that the term yarn or yarning is in their living memories and they do not understand its meaning as telling tales or false stories. It is similar to the yarning literature in that it is about sharing through discussion and connecting.

Yarning is a method of knowledge exchange that embodies the oral traditions of Indigenous cultures (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010; Dean, 2010). Yarning as a concept is well recognised in many Indigenous contexts across Australia. It was only through the Indigenous scholars who have published their experiences in using yarning as a methodology and their intellectual contributions in defining yarning in research paradigms that it was possible for me to extend the yarning yarn. Dean (2010) defines yarning as 'a holistic approach that allows Aboriginal researchers to take into account the past, present and future implications for all involved' (p. 7). Yarning is much more than conversation; yarning can be formal or informal discussions that honour and recognise the importance of story in knowledge exchange. Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010), the authors of the most well-known yarning scholarship, propose that there are four different types of yarning. First is 'social yarning', which is (usually) an informal discussion that takes place before the research and assists in developing a relationship with the participants. Second is 'research topic yarning', which they define as 'conversation with a purpose' and occurs during the process of the research. Third is 'collaborative yarning', that 'takes place between two or more people where they are actively engaged in sharing information about the research project'. Collaborative yarning may take place during the research process or in the dissemination of findings. The fourth is 'therapeutic yarning', when participants are yarning at any time and the conversation moves to personal disclosure that may include recalling trauma or emotional events (p. 40).

The scholarship developed by Bessarab and Ng'andu was one of the first significant pieces of methodological literature for researchers who wanted to incorporate yarning into their research design. As a methodology, yarning is in its infancy though, and as Indigenous cultures are not homogenous, yarning can be conceptualised and applied in research in different ways. In my research, I define yarning through the establishment of our relational connections (kin, country and community) and our reading of each other: physically; spiritually; socially and in a work setting, professionally. Equally, yarning is about listening. It is about listening to each other, listening to ourselves and listening to our (gut) feelings. The connecting and reading happens for me with all who I engage in a yarn with, although connecting emerges differently with Indigenous people than it does with non-Indigenous people.

Relationality and yarning

Many Indigenous scholars globally discuss the significance of relationships to Indigenous cultures (Bull, 2010; Sarra, 2011; Martin, 2012a, 2012b; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Yarning is implicit in relationships and vice versa. Yarning is a process for establishing connections, boundaries, expectations, accountability and social conditions (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010; Dean, 2010). Through acknowledging and articulating the role of yarning, it can be seen as adding rigour to the often contested paradigm of Indigenist research. Although yarning is socially embedded, what this means in a research context needs to be further analysed by Indigenous scholars.

Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) explain that yarning is often non-linear and can move quickly from a focus on a particular topic to other subjects that may not be related. As yarning takes place throughout a period of time, relationships strengthen, thus yarns may become more in depth or move to a personal nature. As a researcher, the boundaries of how relationships emerge and develop in the research context is an important consideration. I believe this is of particular importance to Indigenous researchers because we have far less scholarship that accurately represents our experiences to draw upon.

How I yarned in the beginning phases with participants about who I am and my family and community connections had the potential to enhance or impede the research process. Even though the latter was not an issue in my study, it is worth noting that this process can be a perilous one for many Indigenous people. What would have happened if there was a participant who had previously had an issue with a family member or community member that I am closely connected to? Would this impact on potential participants ability and willingness to participate in my study?

The Indigenous-specific issues and tensions around researcher–participant relationships are often discussed in the literature as insider/outsider research (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). However, some problematic issues arise when such binaries are applied to Indigenous relationality. Intersectionality is widely accepted as impacting on one's positioning (Bhopal and Preston, 2012). Intersections of gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, where a person lives, for example, all impact on how a researcher can be perceived in relation to their insider or outsider status. Thus, Tuhiwai Smith (2012) reminds us that although one can be observed as an insider by an outsider, they may, in fact, be perceived as an outsider by an insider.

The concept of relationality underpins how Aboriginal people introduce ourselves. This protocol is not only a core part of being Aboriginal, but it is also an important cultural protocol so that other Aboriginal people can place you and know how you are related (to country and kin, place and space). Indigenous researchers undertaking education research in institutionalised contexts will need to be able to engage this protocol, irrespective of the time constraints that exist in institutionalised settings such as schools (Shay, 2016). For Aboriginal researchers, research takes place within the context of our Aboriginality and the values embedded within our epistemologies (Bullen, 2004). However, allowing connections to be made through discussing your family and community connections takes time. Building this time into the research design for Indigenous researchers is crucial if we are to truly bring Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being into education research. These constraints can be a challenge for Indigenous higher degree research students and early career researchers if they have supervisors who do not understand the significance of these protocols (Laycock *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, the increasing pressure from universities to have research degree students complete their studies within strict timeframes performs a form of epistemic exclusion and dismisses Indigenous knowledge that is often espoused in Indigenous education statements and other formal university documents. Undertaking my PhD allowed me the space to consider the very real and practical barriers that Indigenous researchers face and the importance of constructing a scholarly argument for why Indigenous researchers sometimes have a different set of issues to consider to non-Indigenous researchers. These considerations are important for all researchers who research in and around Indigenous communities, cultures and people.

Indigenous Australians are a minority, comprising of approximately 3% of the population nationally (ABS, 2013). We are a small community and can often make connections, even when we are far from our home communities. This is one of the greatest strengths that Indigenous people bring to the academy and to an emerging Indigenous-led research agenda. Our lived experiences and connections mean that we have direct and lived understandings of educational (and broader) issues that impact on our people every day. Moreover, Tuhiwai Smith (2005) argues that Indigenous research presents 'new and different ways to think through the purpose, practices, and outcomes of schooling systems' (p. 94). However, with these strengths and opportunities comes the potential for issues to arise.

Issues such as having participants who might be your relation or kin, having more senior family and community of participants and the researcher within the one group and historical conflicts within family groups are just some of the issues that may come up when bringing a group of Indigenous people together. Managing conflict or issues is not something that is covered in research training as it is not usually such an issue for Western researchers. Therefore, Indigenous researchers are often left to figure out how to manage these types of situations as they occur in the best way that they can. Furthermore, the consequence of such conflict arising in a research space can often transcend professional boundaries for Indigenous researchers. Put simply, if we make a mistake or offend; if we undertake work that is not seen by our respective community as contributing to the betterment of our whole community as opposed to ourselves as individuals; if we do not do a good job or if we do not interact in a way that the community or group view as culturally safe and respectful––there can be very real personal consequences for Indigenous researchers. By personal consequences, I am not referring to personal financial loss or a stain on my professional reputation. When an Indigenous person identifies and represents themselves as Indigenous, we identify our families and communities when we do so. Therefore, the consequences of our personal and professional actions reflect and implicate our families and communities. The reality of being a minority and utilising specific and unique knowledge that we have in a research space means that the body of methodological literature is yet to fully explore in-depth unique issues such as this. Again, this discussion is relevant for all researchers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Methods for collecting yarning data

Yarning as a methodology is emerging in research literature. The scholarship that is available provides a solid foundation for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to consider the significance of yarning as a way of sharing information with Indigenous people within the context of research (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010; Dean, 2010; Fredericks *et al.*, 2011; Geia *et al.*, 2013). However, one gap in this scholarship is critical discussion about how to collect yarning data.

Some authors do not mention specifically how yarning data are recorded (Dean, 2010; Fredericks *et al.*, 2011; Geia *et al.*, 2013). However, Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) explain that the yarns with research participants were voice recorded in their practice examples. One author explained that they felt they needed to find an appropriate time during social yarning initially to introduce the voice recorded to the participants (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010). It was reported that two participants refused when the request was made by the researcher to record the yarns.

Indigenous scholarship about yarning and how data are recorded appears to be synonymous with the broader research literature on interviews and focus groups. There is an overwhelming number of qualitative researchers who view a story or reported experiences from participants via interviews as the most effective way of understanding a research problem and generating quality data (Silverman, 2006; Oliver, 2010). Although within this scholarship, the method of audio or video recording interviews or focus groups has been critiqued by some scholars as presenting issues that researchers need to consider when conducting interviews (Al-Yateem, 2012).

In a similar way to the broader literature on interviewing participants, the yarning literature espouses to elicit the same quality of knowledge but with Indigenous participants, in a culturally safe way (Fredericks *et al.*, 2011). However, through recording Indigenous participants and using yarning to draw information, story and knowledge to solve research questions, there needs to be much more advanced discussions in yarning scholarship about the ethical implications of this. Moreover, the issues and critical discussion that have emerged from recording interview data can assist in thinking through similar issues when considering the most efficient and ethical way to collect yarning data.

One of the most common issues discussed in interviewing methodology scholarship is the paradigmatic and theoretical debate between constructivism and positivism (Speer and Hutchby, 2003). Positivist researchers caution using interviews as a method for researching human experience as they argue that the construction of story loses the objectivity of human behaviour and interaction (Speer and Hutchby, 2003). Conversely, Punch (2009) explains that the use of interviews in qualitative research is considered to be an effective way of 'accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions or situations and constructions of reality' (p. 144); thus, advocating a constructivist position of understanding human experiences. Silverman (2007, 2013) concludes that researchers who identify with constructivist paradigms champion the interview method as providing voice and space for participants to tell their story as the most authentic way of creating knowledge about particular issues and groups. However, their justification for using interviews is somewhat contradictory as it is over-reliant on positivist notions of validity and truth. The persistence and over-reliance on interview data as a way of understanding human experience are further critiqued by Silverman (2006), who argues that all interview data are socially embedded, therefore is unable to be locked into a positivist reality of objectivity and validity that so many qualitative researchers continue to believe that interview data produce. Thus, researchers that insist that audio recording somehow is more accurate and whole because the audio recording captures a person's response or story verbatim loses its merit when notions of objectivity and 'truth' cannot be validated through a constructivist lens, a framing that is needed in working with human experiences through story. Irrespective of a researcher's position of positivist or constructivist, the most common method of collecting interview data is through audio or video recording (Punch, 2009).

One of the arguments for audio or video recording include capturing the entirety of the interview or reported experience or story from the participants (Speer and Hutchby, 2003; Punch, 2009). Regardless of whether the interview is structured or unstructured, audio or video recording captures all discussion, including when the participants meander off topic or disclose other information that may or may not be relevant to the research topic. Cohen *et al.* (2007) explain that the transcribed audio data generated from an interview then becomes the most crucial aspect of undertaking interview research. Audio (predominantly) and video recording is advocated to the degree that when some methodology texts discuss interviewing, there is no separate section on how data are collected because it is assumed that data will be audio recorded. The implied assumption of audio or video recording appears to be mirrored in the yarning methodology literature (although there is much less scholarship to draw from). However, in the context of yarning methodology and Indigenist research, I argue that there needs to be critical discussion about the perceived benefits of capturing all spoken words during data collection.

Although audio and video recording is espoused as being the dominant form of collecting data from interviews, the substantial discussion in the literature describes the cautions and issues that can arise from audio and video recording interviews with research participants. Audio or video recording interview participants introduces a dynamic in the interaction that some authors caution can censor or inhibit a participant's ability, to be honest or authentic in their responses (Speer and Hutchby, 2003; Al-Yateem, 2012). Furthermore, Oliver (2010) discusses the dynamic that occurs with the introduction of a recording device to an interview situation, which can cause intimidation to research participants. Other cautions outlined in the literature include censoring of responses by participants (Speer and Hutchby, 2003) and losing valuable contextual information, thus losing important aspects of the social interaction (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). When considering the benefits and cautions outlined in the research literature on recording interview data, there are important aspects of the discussion that are relevant to considering whether audio or video recording Indigenous participants who are participating in yarning as a methodology in the context of research. There are also additional layers due to the historical impact of colonisation and objectivist research that Indigenous people have been subject to (or subjects of).

In contrast to these cautions, Rice *et al.* (2016) outline that advancements in digital technologies have provided a range of platforms for audio and video recording to be used within the research. The authors concluded that many Indigenous young people are active users of social media and may be more likely to participate in activities such as research because of positive associations with identity and culture they have with various digital technologies. Moreover, in a study on use of technology in language revitalisation from participants representing 47 Indigenous languages globally, Gella (2016) reports that technology is a powerful tool that supports language revitalisation. However, Gella also outlined some limitations of over-reliance of technology, particularly in relation to language in recognising that not all Indigenous people readily have access to technologies, which can impede both the research process and the perceived benefits of using such technologies.

By using yarning, a culturally familiar and safe way for Indigenous participants to share their knowledge, stories and experiences, it can create an ideal shared space through which Indigenous participants may feel relaxed, secure and safe. Participant's feelings of comfort and perceived safety may be especially so if an Indigenous researcher is facilitating the yarning. All of these factors are beneficial given the goals outlined in the two key Indigenous research ethical guidelines in Australia developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (2003) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (2012). Principles such as respect and cultural safety underpin the future of Indigenous-focused research. The critical issue of ethical considerations in relation to audio or video recording Indigenous people in the research space is yet to be mentioned in the literature.

In using yarning in my project, the yarns included a range of topics that may have appeared off the course of the research question but were in effect reflective of how Indigenous people express the story ontologically. Had I used voice or audio recording, I would have captured the accompanying story for each response; the sharing of experience related to our social connections; the many jokes and laughs we shared in between discussing the research questions and the topics that participants told me they feared discussing for a variety of reasons. I wholeheartedly agree with Dean (2010) and her assertion that yarning does allow Indigenous people to exert significant control over the research process. However, if the data are to be audio or voice recorded, I believe that in effect compromises the authority of participants to choose what they want to be recorded as part of the research.

One of the core principles of the Guideline for Ethical Research in Indigenous Australian Studies (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2012) is self-determination. Although participants provide informed consent, if a researcher is using yarning as a methodology and audio or voice recording participants, the principle of self-determination is significantly compromised for two reasons. The first reason is that although participants may want to contribute to the research and participate in yarning with the researcher or group, they may for a good reason not want to be audio recorded. Participants being wary of being audio recorded is not a new phenomenon (Oliver, 2010). However, wariness and caution from Indigenous participants may be connected to the deeply problematic ways in which knowledge has been produced about Indigenous people. Indigenous research guidelines exist because of the failure to recognise cultural difference and racialised assumptions that undermined Indigenous rights and knowledge up until recently (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003). Scientific research saw many Western researchers observe, surveil and objectify Indigenous people (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Therefore, there is a historically situated discomfort and mistrust that an audio or video recorder may cause in an Indigenous research setting.

The second reason is the lack of control or self-determination that participants are given when their yarning is audio or video recorded. Use of audio recording and also use of a range of digital technologies means that data are usually recorded and transcribed (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Cross checking with each participant with a full transcription would be extremely difficult, given how much detail a transcription will entail. Through using other methods of data collection, such as storyboarding employed in this study, it provided opportunity for authority and self-determination to participants to decide at the moment what they would like to be recorded. As a researcher, there were times when participants would be yarning in depth about something that would have been very useful to capture as data. However, participants would decide to leave aspect out or not record them at all.

Another key concern discussed in interview recording literature is the censorship that can occur when participants are being recorded. Speer and Hutchby (2003) outline that participants who know they are being recorded regularly censor themselves and their responses, often to present themselves in a positive light. Furthermore, this censorship can compromise the data or understanding of the problem. In the context of Indigenous research, I perceive censorship as self-determination in action. In this study, the censorship that occurred ensured that participants were in control of their stories, knowledge and representations. Using yarning as a methodology will never create knowledge that is pure or truth (nor will any other method in human research). Therefore, given the history and imperialistic nature of knowledge created about Indigenous participants, censorship in Indigenous research contexts is a way of ensuring Indigenous participants are in control of what is being recorded about us.

Oliver (2010) warns that the presence of recording devices in interview settings can cause intimidation. In this project, I did not systematically ask participants for feedback on the research process. However, I had documented feedback from six of the nineteen participants that they had said during the research process that they felt relieved that they were not audio recorded. Given the historical nature of what recording devices mean in the context of Indigenous research, extension on existing yarning methodology research is needed to provide researchers with feasible alternatives. Excluding participants through using audio recording devices and other technologies should be a real consideration for all researchers working with Indigenous participants. Using audio recording devices and other technologies should not be the catalyst of whether a participant agrees to be part of a research project or not. In providing a balanced discussion on benefits and cautions in using audio recording and other digital technologies, it is clear that in some situations use of digital technologies is best, particularly if the research design is co-developed with Indigenous participants. However, it is vital that Indigenist researchers consider their use of audio recording and digital technologies and critically reflect on why they are using it and whether it is an appropriate method in collecting yarning data rather than using these methods as the default way of collecting data.

Storyboards as a data collection method

There are reliable and rigorous alternatives to audio recording yarns, narratives or stories. Stuart (2012) extends on existing narrative methodology literature through proposing methods centred on activity theory that can be utilised as reflective tools. This unique development of narrative methodology by Stuart offers a research design that is participant-centred and not reliant on traditional social scientific forms of qualitative data such as interviews and focus groups. The approach provides multiple opportunities for co-research and for participants to be true partners in the research process. The specific aspect of Stuart's methodological approach that is used in this study is the use of 'storyboards'. This unique data collection framework is suitable for the multidisciplinary, practitioner-orientated context of flexi schools where this research took place. Given the similarities and challenges, narrative researchers face when considering how to collect data that consists of participant stories and experiences, storyboards as participant-driven text from many yarns that took place during the research offered a very viable alternative to audio or video recording. During data collection, yarning was the process for exploring the research topics with participants, with storyboards forming the data collected during the workshops conducted with participants. The storyboards were a text written during and after the yarning about research topics, either written by me as the researcher or by participants themselves. As text was written, participants were regularly asked to cross check what was being written and re-visit later in analysing whether the text accurately reflected their responses to the research topics. This method for collecting research data worked effectively in both group and individual research settings.

Development of Collaborative Yarning Methodology

Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) highlight the difficulties, particularly for Indigenous researchers in using yarning as a methodology because of the distinct lack of literature available for researchers to utilise. Moreover, as there is an established methodological body of work on narratives within Western research paradigms, this becomes even more of a challenge for Indigenous researcher's fight to legitimise use of methods that reflect Indigenous knowledge and ways of being, knowing and doing. Bessarab and Ng'andu distinguish their experiences as Indigenous women (from two different countries) and frame the legitimacy as not just rejecting Western paradigms that objectified us in the past, but in discerning the distinctness of yarning within the cultural protocols and norms within which yarning takes place.

Bessarab and Ng'andu developed their methodology using reflections from their own research contexts, both community based and exploring issues of health (Ng'andu) and gendered experiences within family (Bessarab). I am not critiquing their reflections of using yarning in their context. Rather, I am seeking to achieve the same outcome of deeply reflecting on yarning as a research process in my research context. Although yarning worked alongside storyboarding (Stuart, 2012) to form my methodology, the restrictions of how I could undertake yarning as part of my methodology as an Indigenist researcher were also influenced by how my research was mediated by the institution (Shay, 2016).

I engaged in deep reflection about the use of yarning as a methodology. Upon reflection, it became clear that yarning is indeed possible in education research, even with the restrictions imposed due to the institutionalised nature of the context. Although time and space are often restricted in education settings, my study is one example of how it is possible to use an Indigenous methodology even with the restrictive and Western-imposed conditions. Although the yarning methodology proposed by Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) clearly articulated their experiences for their research contexts, yarning was less compartmentalised in this study. I used yarning methodology in both group and one-on-one contexts, and in both I found that yarning was not sequential and was highly dependent on existing connections and relationships. I have represented my experiences of yarning in a research context in a diagram I developed that visually represents how yarning took place in this research and could potentially be useful for future researchers:

In Figure 1, I illustrate the multidimensional, interwoven way that yarning took place in my education research project. Although some yarns were what Bessarab and Ng'andu would have characterised as 'research yarns', there were many elements which entered the discussion in often non-direct ways. The

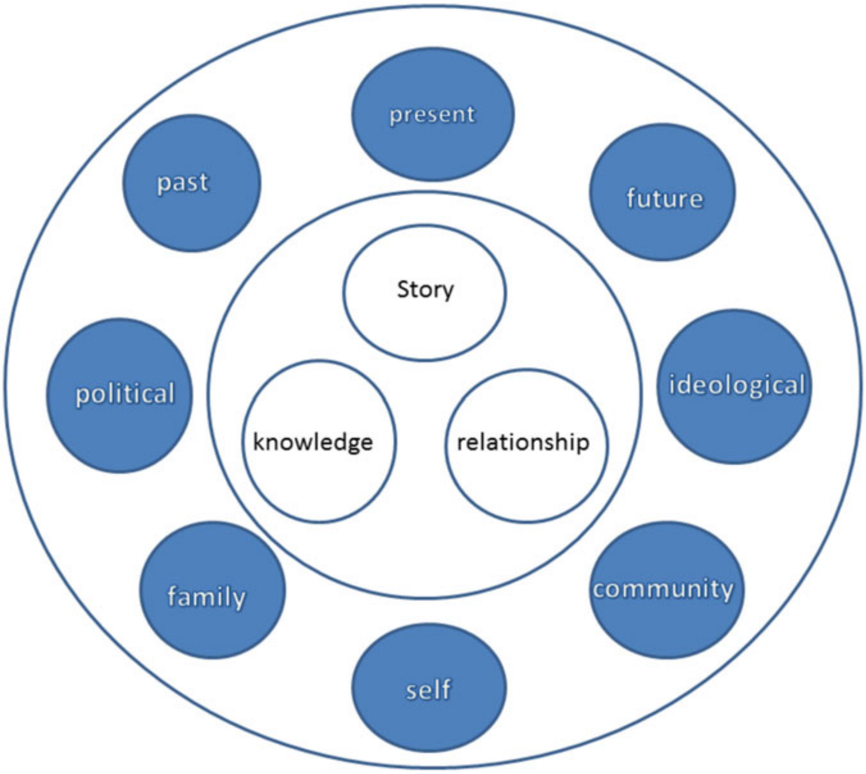


Fig. 1. Collaborative Yarning Methodology (Shay, 2016).

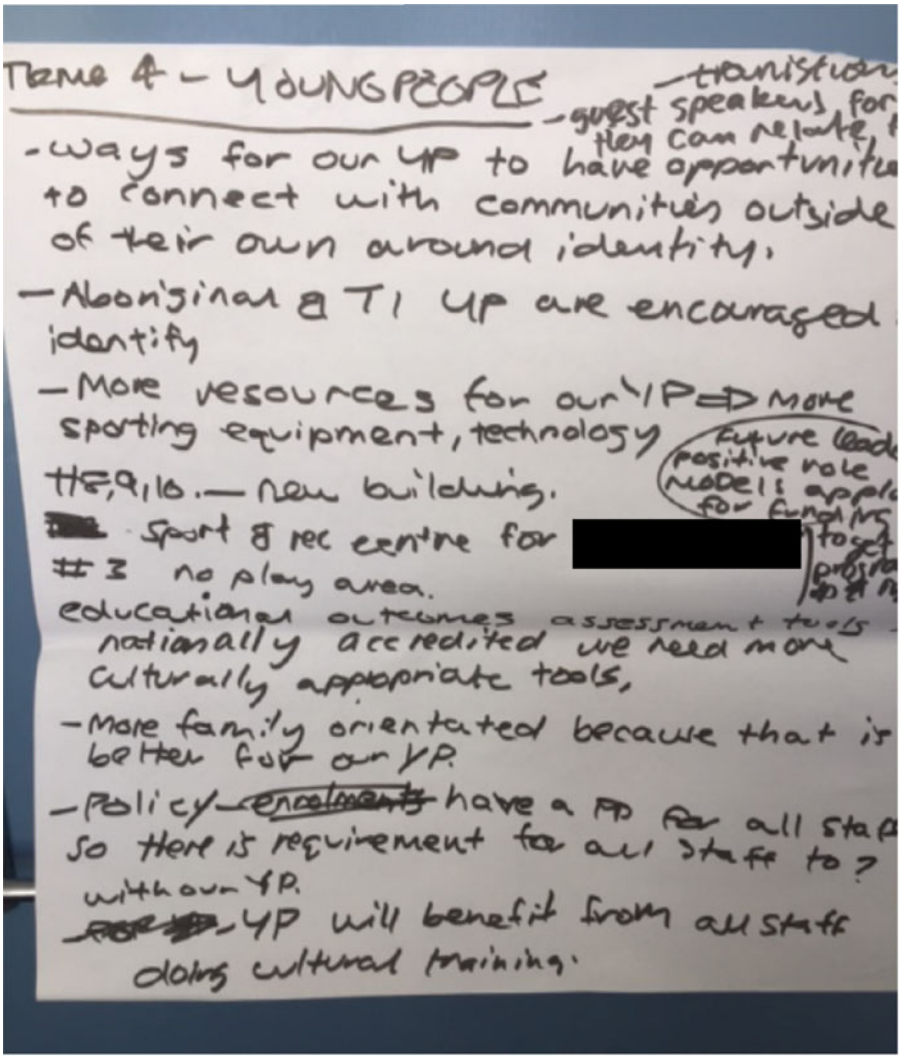
diagram is represented through the use of circles. Circles are significant to many Aboriginal people and in some Aboriginal cultures can be symbols of meeting places, waterholes, food and relatedness. In articulating Aboriginal ontology, Martin (2012a, 2012b) explains that circles are important because there is a starting point, no end and reflect continuous cycles which underpin the premise of relationality. Although time conditions are an imposition in research that occurs in institutionalised contexts, once the relationship is established, I propose that Indigenist research undertaken by Indigenous scholars is an ongoing engagement—beyond the life of the project.

In Figure 1, yarning is central as it is the core of the process or methodology. Embedded within this process are the three key aspects of the process: story, knowledge and relationship. Story was often drawn upon to recall responses to research topics, share responses and analyse experiences. Story is underpinned by knowledge, which often sits within and what might be perceived as outside the realm of the research topic. Through using yarning as a methodology, it affirms Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing of participants. Story that is not restricted by Western conditions outlined in narrative theory scholarship is essential in recognising not only the epistemic contribution from Indigenous participants but the ontological significance of story. Finally, relationships were also drawn upon throughout the process of yarning. Within the research space, relationships impacted on how yarning occurred. Relationships can include relationships with people, institutions, country, community and animals.

In my study, researcher–participant relationships mattered. In some instances, there was an existing relationship, and in others, a relationship was developing. Relationships among participants in this study also mattered. Some participants were related (kin) or had different roles that had gender and age-related implications in their authority to speak on particular issues. In theorising relatedness and its connectedness to Aboriginal ontology and epistemology, Martin (2008) articulates the ‘practices of living relatedness’ as the ‘ontological premise’ (p. 80) as bound with an Aboriginal epistemological framework. In other words, we cannot know without relatedness. Thus, relationships or relatedness is a core part of knowing and sharing knowledge in the process of yarning. Relationships then impact on how yarning occurs, whether it is community-based research or the research takes place in an institutionalised context like education.

Eight circles surround the inner circles of the diagram. These circles represent family, self, community, ideological, political, past, present and future. All of these are what participants bring to any one yarn. They are deliberately placed in a circle to demonstrate the connectedness and the way in which these elements discursively operate; organically and with no one having more importance over another. In a circle, all is equal. It is not possible for one element to be in a higher order than the other. Therefore, the past is no more or less important than the present, or the future. The community is no less or more important than family, or self. Political is no more or less important than ideological. However, they all inform participant and researcher’s positionality within the yarning space. Moreover, a response is not possible without participant’s drawing on at least one of these elements at any one time. Threads of each of these elements could be heard as each participant shared their responses to the research yarns.

Perhaps the most glaring insight gained from listening to participants and their feedback about the methodology was the need to resist traditional qualitative social science methods that remain dominant such as interviewing and recording group discussions, particularly when using a methodology such as yarning. A critical aspect to CYM is in using yarning as a process and approach to



Theme 4 – YOUNG PEOPLE

—tranistion

-guest speakers for
they can relate,

-ways for our YP to have opportunite
to connect with communities outside
of their own around identity.

—Aboriginal & TI YP are encouraged
identify

—More resources for our YP ⇒ More
sporting equipment, technology

#8,9,10.— new building.

~~[illegible]~~ Sport & rec centre for [redacted]

#3 no play area.

Future lead
positive role
models appl
for funding
to get
progra

educational outcomes assessment tools
nationally accredited we need more
culturally appropriate tools,

-More family orientated because that is
better for our YP.

-Policy ~~enrolments~~ have a PD for all staf
so there is requirement for all staff to ?
with our YP.

~~[illegible]~~ - YP will benefit from all staff
doing cultural training.

Fig. 2. Storyboard, individual.

undertaking research collaboratively with participants and is the researcher using methods for collecting data that do not re-produce similar outcomes and processes to that used in research that over-relies on audio and video recording.

I used the approach of yarning with participants about the research topic (and anything else that emerged) and then I worked collaboratively with participants for them to consider what was recorded textually on the research yarns via the storyboard. In collecting data this way, participants were more engaged with the process of the research and were co-analysing during data collection. Figure 2 provides an example of what a storyboard looks like as was data produced:

Allowing participants to yarn through the topics introduced by the researcher, the storyboard is completed (this can be done in a one-on-one scenario or a group scenario). In a one-on-one, participants have the option of writing responses themselves or the researcher writes the responses but clearly and in front of the participant. The researcher communicates very clearly that notes will be taken and encourages participants to read and advise of what is recorded. During this process, a co-analysis takes place whereby the researcher cross-checks what is written with the participant about what they would like recorded. My experience in using this method across a number of projects now with Indigenous participants is that participants are more engaged in the process of the research and will often instruct me to further include various responses, correct things if I did not accurately reflect their thought in short hand, or if they felt a particular story was really important, I would ensure it was included.

Similarly, in a group scenario, the storyboard can be completed by participants or the researcher. Critically, in a group scenario, all participants must be allocated an identifier that is noted by the researcher. This is to ensure that the responses, if individual, are allocated to the participants response. A large portion of the respondents did want to work in a group, which is fairly common in Indigenous cultures. It is still very possible to include individual responses on a group storyboard. However, planning for this by the researcher through recording participants names alongside their identifier (I used #number, which participants were asked to remember). When yarning was taking place and I asked if they would like that recorded on the storyboard, participants would often remind me of their allocated number. This process, I advocate, is a highly appropriate and culturally safe way to work collaboratively in research with Indigenous people who have been objectified and observed for research purposes that have not resulted in any significant discoveries that have helped advance our well-being or outcomes.

Conclusion

Developing and growing scholarship on Indigenous methodologies is crucial if we are to try and expand on our understanding of complex issues in our communities. Furthermore, critical research conceptualised by Indigenous people in institutionalised education settings in Australia must not be limited by over-reliance on Western methodologies that only end up reproducing the same answers to old problems.

In this paper, I shared my insights through using a combination of yarning and storyboards in school-based research, which resulted in a deep understanding of my topic but without requiring participants to be subjected to audio recording devices to explore the experiences of participants. If audio recording and other technologies are used, I am proposing that use of these are co-developed with Indigenous participants over using this method and participants having no choice about the ways in which their experiences and stories are captured. Rather, I carefully considered how principles such as self-determination and collaboration could take place beyond superficial conditions. Although I am clear throughout this paper that my positionality as an Aboriginal person impacts on all aspects of my research, my Indigeneity is not merely enough to ensure I am doing ethical Indigenist research. Careful consideration and deeper thinking about how principles such as collaboration and self-determination can transpire in research contexts required creatitvity and challenging dominant paradigms even within the restrictions of institutionalised settings.

Through developing Collaborative Research Methodology, I was able to consider existing scholarship and develop an approach that encompasses the many aspects of yarning discussed by key authors in the field and as well as my reflections in undertaking my doctoral study. The non-linear ways in which yarning took place in this study still resulted in rich data that answered my research questions, while also ensuring participants were partners in the collection and initial analysis of the data via the storyboards. My intention in this paper was to provide some more balance to the literature in discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the many methodologies available to researchers who research in Indigenous contexts and propose deeper critical thinking when considering methodological framing to ensure the research design is fit for purpose and meets the needs of both the researcher and the participants. It is important for Indigenous scholars to write about these issues because there is a dire need to grow our numbers of Indigenous academics and having a body of Indigenous scholarship for new researchers to draw from is critical if we are to expand on our ways of knowing and understanding.

Acknowledgements. My PhD was supervised by A/Prof Jo Lampert, A/Prof Grace Sarra and Aunty Denise Proud. Thanks and acknowledgment to my supervision team for their supervision and guidance in developing this work.

References

ABS (2013) Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011. Available at http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001.

Al-Yateem N (2012) The effect of interview recording on quality of data obtained: a methodological reflection. *Nurse Researcher* **19**, 31–35.

Archibald J-A (2008) *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (2012) Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies: retrieved January 6 2015. Available at http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/_files/research/GERAIS.pdf.

Bessarab D and Ng'andu B (2010) Yarning about yarning as a legitimate method in Indigenous research. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies* **3**, 37–50.

Bhopal K and Preston J (2012) *Intersectionality and 'Race' in Education*. New York: Routledge.

Bull JR (2010) Research with aboriginal peoples: authentic relationships as a precursor to ethical research. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* **5**, 13–22.

Bullen C (2004) 'Doing' indigenous research: reflections, questions, and challenges. *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal* **28**, 9–10.

Cohen L, Manion L and Morrison K (2007) *Research Methods in Education*, 6th Edn. USA and Canada, New York: Routledge.

Dean C (2010) A yarning place in narrative histories. *History of Education Review* **39**, 6–13.

Denzin NK, Lincoln YS and Smith LT (2008) *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.

Fredericks B, Adams K, Finlay S, Fletcher G, Andy S, Briggs L, and Hall R (2011) Engaging the practice of Indigenous yarning in action research. *ALAR: Action Learning and Action Research Journal* **17**, 12–24.

Galla C (2016) Indigenous language revitalization, promotion, and education: function of digital technology. *Computer Assisted Language and Learning* **29**, 1137–1151.

Geia L, Hayes B and Usher K (2013) Yarning/Aboriginal storytelling: towards an understanding of an Indigenous perspective and its implications for research practice. *Contemporary Nurse* **46**, 13.

Jacob WJ, Cheng SY and Porter MK (2015) *Indigenous Education Language, Culture and Identity*. Dordrecht: Springer Verlag.

Laycock A, Walker D, Harrison N and Brands J (2011) *Researching Indigenous Health: A Practical Guide for Researchers*. Melbourne: The Lowitja Insitute.

Martin K (2012a) *Please Knock Before you Enter Aboriginal Regulations of Outsiders and the Implications for Researchers*. Teneriffe: Post Pressed.

Martin K (2012b) Aboriginal early childhood: Past, present, future. In Phillips J and Lampert J (eds), *Introductory Indigenous Studies in Education Reflections and the Importance of Knowing*, 2nd Edn, Frenchs Forest: Pearson, pp. 26–39.

Mucina DD (2011) Story as research methodology. *AlterNative* **7**, 1–14.

National Health & Medical Research Council (2003). Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research. Available at https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e52.pdf.

O'Conner P and Kellerman S (2015) Grammarphobia. Available at http://www.grammarphobia.com/blog/2015/10/yarn.html.

Oliver P (2010) *The Student's Guide to Research Ethics* (Vol. 2nd;2;). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Punch K (2009) *Introduction to Research Methods in Education*. Hampshire: Sage Publications Inc.

Rice E, Haynes E, Royce P and Thompson S (2016) Social media and digital technology use among Indigenous young people in Australia: a literature review. *International Journal for Equity in Health* **15**, 81.

Rigney L (2006) Indigenist research and aboriginal Australia. In Goduka N and Kunnie J (eds), *Indigenous People's Wisdoms and Power: Affirming our Knowledges Through Narrative*. London: Ashgate Publishing, pp. 32–50.

Sarra C (2011) *Strong and Smart––Towards A Pedagogy for Emancipation: Education for First Peoples*. Oxon: Routledge.

Shay M (2016) Seeking new paradigms in aboriginal education research: methodological opportunities, challenges and aspirations. *HSE Social and Education History* **5**, 273–296.

Silverman D (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction*, vol. **3rd**. Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.

Silverman D (2007) A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about Qualitative Research. Available at http://QUT.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=585422.

Silverman D (2013) What counts as qualitative research? Some cautionary comments. *Qualitative Sociology Review* **9**, 48–55.

Speer SA and Hutchby I (2003) From ethics to analytics: aspects of participants' orientations to the presence and relevance of recording devices. *Sociology* **37**, 315–337.

Stuart K (2012) Narratives and activity theory as reflective tools in action research. *Educational Action Research* **20**, 439–453.

Tuhiwai Smith L (2005) Building a research agenda for Indigenous epostemologies and education. *Anthrolopology & Education Quarterly* **36**, 93–95.

Tuhiwai Smith L (2012) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd Edn. London: Zed Books.

Wain T, Sim M, Bessarab D, Mak D, Hayward C and Rudd C (2016) Engaging Australian Aboriginal narratives to challenge attitudes and create empathy in health care: a methodological perspective. *BMC Medical Education* **16**, 156.

Marnee Shay is an Aboriginal educator and researcher who works in the fields of alternative education and Indigenous education. Marnee is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education and a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Policy Futures in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Queensland.