

An Indigenous data analysis framework of practice and Carmen's Theory

Carmen Parter^{1,2,3} , Shae Brown⁴ , Elizabeth Florence Rix⁵ 
and Shawn Wilson⁶ 

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Abstract

This article addresses a significant gap in our scholarly knowledge concerning the use of Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing, in research data analysis, when applying Indigenous philosophies and research methodologies. Often as Indigenous researchers when applying an Indigenous paradigm, standpoint, methodology and methods, we tend to revert to non-Indigenous western science approaches to the data analysis process, which was the case for first author Carmen when she was undertaking her Doctor of Philosophy and applied thematic analysis. To avoid conflicts between the use of the *ologies*, that is, ways of being, knowing, and doing, that are evident between Indigenous and western sciences we provide an Indigenist data analysis framework. This work adds value to scholarly knowledge by providing a way to maintain our Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing, during the data analysis research process, as we continue to restore our Indigeneity when applying an Indigenist paradigm and standpoint.

Keywords

decolonising the academy, Indigenous approaches to knowledge, Indigenous data analysis, Indigenous epistemologies, new methods and methodologies

Introduction

In this article, we challenge the universal dominance of western euro-Australian knowledge production and methodologies by providing an Indigenous data analysis framework that centres Indigenous Knowledges of cultural ways of being, knowing, and doing.

Indigenous sciences have been emerging in the scientific western world of knowledge production for over three decades, especially within qualitative health and social sciences spaces (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Geia et al., 2013; Kennedy et al., 2022; Kovach, 2009; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2003, 2008). Indigenous scholars have been developing, rightfully appropriate ways, to create new knowledges, while decolonising western research spaces (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999), such as Walter and Anderson's (2013) Indigenous research methodology for statistical data analysis.

This article's Indigenous data analysis framework addresses what is lacking in western data analysis methods, namely the sophistication of an Indigenous paradigm and worldview of relationality, the inclusion of cultural obligations, Indigenous protocols, and contexts such as relational accountability to participants, Elders, and communities (Henry et al., 2016; Wilson, 2007). More significantly, deep-critical self-reflection is absent, as is the

traditional oral passing on of knowledges through storytelling, metaphor, and ancestral knowledges (Wilson, 2008; Windchief & Ryan, 2018).

We discuss thematic analysis within the use of Indigenous philosophies and methodologies in research. We go on to introduce Carmen's Theory, a data analysis spiral and Yunkaporta, Moodie, and Shillingsworth's Indigenous data analysis processes. These concepts collectively inform what we call an Indigenous Australian data analysis methodology

¹Djurali Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research and Education, Heart Research Institute, Australia

²Indigenous Studies, Naru Gili, University of New South Wales Sydney, Australia

³Faculty of Medicine, Health and Human Sciences, Macquarie University, Australia

⁴Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples and Faculty of Education, Southern Cross University, Australia

⁵The University of Adelaide, Australia

⁶Department of Community, Culture and Global Studies, Irving K. Barber Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The University of British Columbia-Okanagan Campus, Canada

Corresponding author:

Carmen Parter, Djurali Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research and Education, Heart Research Institute, 7 Eliza Street, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Email: carmen.parter@hri.org.au

and practice framework that is grounded in Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous cultures. In addition, we also educate non-Indigenous scholars on respecting and sanctioning the value of Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous cultures in knowledge production (Kennedy et al., 2022; Kovach, 2009; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2003, 2008).

Due to limitations inherent in the English language, we need to explain how *I* is deliberately used. For the first author Carmen, *I* reaffirms my Indigeneity and my positioning as an expert knower, arising from thousands of years of ancestral, communal, oral knowledges, that are often not fully understood within the dominant society, especially within the academy, and in policy development.

The *I* is a demonstration of resistance while dismantling the white histories and stories of discrimination and oppression in a colonised country like Australia (Rigney, 1999). The *I* purposively disrupts expectations of dominant western sciences of knowledge production and literacy, an emancipatory and liberating process (Rigney, 1999). The *I* also demonstrates setting my own political agenda of liberation and relates to me, as an Indigenous person leading research, to “responsibly service and inform the political liberation struggle” (Rigney, 1999, p. 177). *I* makes me accountable to the community (Wilson, 2008) when fighting for the rights to practice our cultures (United Nations General Assembly, 2007). Privileging my voice and the voices of other Indigenous people gives voice to our lived experiences, stories, and communal oral knowledges. Rigney argues that they contain our aspirations, ideas, lore, and traditions, sometimes attained through our dreaming of the non-living world (Rigney, 1999).

While the *I* is my story, I describe insights and convey new knowledges gained from analysing data during my

PhD research study. The *I* also carries the weight of our collective Indigenous voices and how we do things in the way that they are done. The knowledge *I* gained is told through storytelling woven throughout this article. As hooks (1999) says, “the personal is political” (p. 66), and a sense of freedom comes as we disrupt, deconstruct, and decolonise (Parter, 2020) western sciences of knowledge production (Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999).

Who are we four?

The first and fourth authors are Indigenous–Australian and Canadian First Nations people. As written elsewhere, we write from an Indigenous paradigm and standpoint (Parter & Wilson, 2021). Fourth author Shawn Wilson, a global leader in Indigenist methodologies, is from Opaskwayak Cree Nation, on the Saskatchewan River Delta in northern Manitoba, Canada. First author Carmen Parter is a proud Murri (Aboriginal people from Queensland, Australia) being from the Juru Clan and Darumbal Clan of the Birra Gubba Nation, Northern and Central Queensland, Australia with South Sea Islander heritage. We acknowledge the Land because the Land forms part of us, and we are part of the Land. Carmen’s background involves working with and helping to further develop Indigenist research methodologies as they continue to grow and, like the Land, also shape who we are as people on this Land. Land is one with us as we learn from Country, who leads and guides us as our teacher. Carmen is a public policy expert whose main interest is to decolonise public policies by centring Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous Cultures in the policy development processes, which is summarised in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Carmen’s Doctor of Philosophy summarised (Parter, 2020).

I explored a topic that I am passionate about in relation to implementing our cultures—known as the cultural determinants of health, in public health policies. This research was informed by communities who consistently said that when making policy, culture is central to our health and well-being. After 20 plus years as a policy maker, I was keen to understand why, other policy makers including governments, found it difficult implementing our Indigenous cultures of ways of being, knowing, and doing, once incorporated into a policy instrument like Australian's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan. Hence, my research question asked: How do policy makers implement culture once our cultures have been incorporated into a public policy instrument? (Parter, 2020).

The two non-Indigenous white co-authors are committed allies and accomplices to Indigenous scholarship in their fight to reverse injustices and power imbalance within the academy and beyond (West et al., 2022). Author 2, Shae Brown (2019, 2021), brings knowledge of pattern thinking and understanding, as an Indigenist approach to ontology and epistemology that engages with the dynamics of life and the knowledge that emerges from relationships. Using ecological patterns and metaphors, Shae's work forms a collective knowing and learning strategy and process called Complexity Patterning. It has been implemented with a wide range of secondary and undergraduate students for teaching relational complexity knowing and understanding. Complexity Patterning is a relational metaknowledge that connects disciplinary or focused knowledges to the wider context. This deep complexity approach is based on a participatory relationship with all other beings and entities, within a complex conceptualisation of time (Brown, 2019, 2021). This work is an example of the concurrent and broad applicability of Indigenist thinking in mainstream educational settings. It is currently being designed into full curriculum for all stages of education and for use by community groups. This author engages with the fact that relational pattern thinking is inherent within an Indigenous Knowledge approach. Pattern thinking and understanding are expressed in the Indigenous data analysis framework presented in this article.

The field of complexity-focused knowledge in the western world can be ironically reductive if acknowledgement of the vast complexity of knowledge and understanding within Indigenous Knowledges is absent. This is true of the quantum field theory-focused work in the areas of new materialism, the emergence of post-qualitative approaches, and the increased inclusivity of post-humanism (Todd, 2016). This article contributes a broadly relational approach to data analysis that engages with complexity thinking and patterns-based understanding, from an Indigenous perspective.

Author 3, Elizabeth or Liz Rix, practised as a renal nurse and, now a scholar, came to understand that by modifying Indigenist paradigms for use by a white researcher, they were acknowledging and confronting power imbalances between health service providers and Aboriginal people. As an accomplice and ally, Liz continues to contribute to the knowledge base about Indigenous methodologies and has also become an advocate within health institutions and the

academy against the dominance of white western knowledge production, especially in nursing and midwifery professions (Rix et al., 2014). Becoming an active and genuine white accomplice to Indigenous scholars within the academy requires deep-critical reflection and the will to walk alongside (Parter et al., 2024). White researcher accomplices' ability to critically reflect on their personal and professional unconscious biases, and white privilege enables them to develop strong positive relationships with Indigenous people, based on two-way understanding and respect for Indigenous Knowledges. Accomplices promote the need for the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing in everything that is done, which involves a collaborative and codesign approach to research and new knowledge production (Rix et al., 2014).

All four of us have known each other as scholars and accomplices. Authors 1, 2, and 3 were research students undertaking our PhD, while Author 4 was our supervisor. Our collective knowledges helped uncover and articulate the processes we describe in this article.

Author 1: while analysing yarning data to identify themes during coding, I applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis while maintaining an Indigenous paradigm and standpoint, which is written elsewhere (Parter & Wilson, 2021) and summarised below.

An Indigenist paradigm and Indigenist standpoint

An Indigenist paradigm and standpoint that centred Indigenous Australians' voices, knowledges, and cultures of ways of being, knowing, and doing, in a public policy qualitative research intervention study, was applied to Author 1's PhD study (Parter & Wilson, 2021). We introduced a framework of inquiry that honours the centrality of our Indigeneity of knowledges of ways of being, knowing, and doing. An Indigenist paradigm, of our Indigenous cultural values and beliefs, that are informed by our race and social, cultural, and economic positioning, as well as our relational worldviews of our reality (our ontology), of our ways of how we know the things that we know (our epistemology), and our ways of how we do the things in the way that we know that they should be done (our axiology), is also honoured. Collectively, these describe our positionality of an Indigenist standpoint, which is cornerstone to an Indigenist paradigm. Our paradigm and standpoint complements the principles that underpin methodology, which in this case relates to Archibald's storywork and the cultural obligations that drive that work. Unavoidably, these methodologies inform the doing or methods such as storytelling or yarning.

The stories/data obtained through yarning, and yarns, with policy actors, are simply conversations, where information and knowledges, can be shared, through the stories, told by the storyteller, a well-recognised form of Indigenous inquiry, which is used across Australia by Indigenous peoples (Barlo et al., 2021; Bessarab, 2016; Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010).

To yarn in this way is inherently different from an interview, focus group, or a regular conversation, because unique cultural protocols are mandatory for researchers (Barlo et al., 2020, 2021; Hughes & Barlo, 2020). These protocols may be unique to each community. Importantly, the relationship between the researcher and storyteller becomes a sacred space, where we attentively listen, and learn, in a way, of how we know and what is real to us, epistemology, and how we do the things that are done in the way that they are to be done, axiology,

and the unique Indigenous values that tell us the way that we are expected to behave, ontology (Archibald [Q’um Q’um Xiiem], 2008b; Barlo et al., 2020). These obligations give voice to the knowledges and theories contained in research participant’s stories, where new knowledge is produced (Archibald [Q’um Q’um Xiiem], 2008a; Brayboy, 2005; Kovach, 2009; Martin, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Figure 2 summarises these protocols including our Indigeneity of the cultural protocols and obligations (Parter & Wilson, 2021).

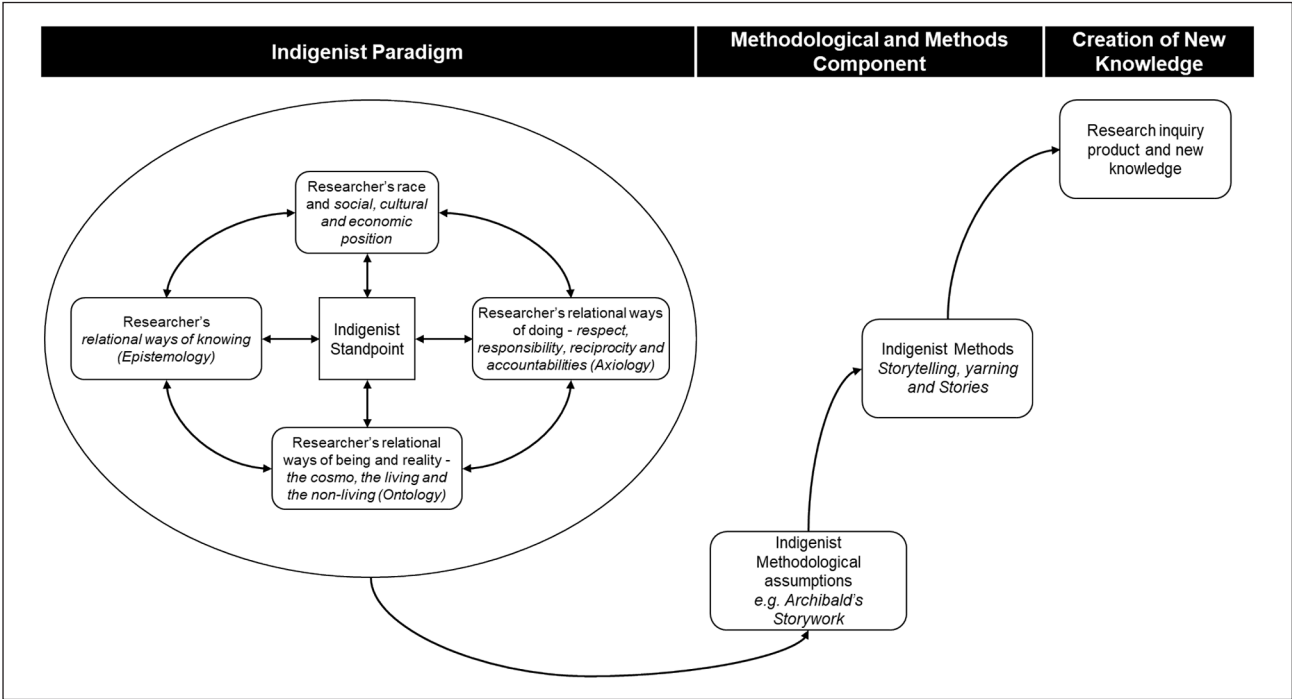


Figure 2. An Indigenist paradigm, Indigenist standpoint, Indigenist methodology and methods (Parter & Wilson, 2021).

In Figure 2, there is a gap in this conceptual diagram, namely the absence of an Indigenist data analysis framework and methodology that describes the doing of data analysis, while maintaining one’s Indigeneity. At the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies conference, held in Brisbane, in the state of Queensland Australia, in 2019, Yunkaporta and Moodie (2019, 2021) similarly highlight the absence of an Indigenous data analysis methodology as well. In this article, I as first author offer my experiences of an example of how I maintained, my Indigeneity, while analysing yarning data. I also developed an Indigenist data analysis framework of practice that describes the processes I undertook when analysing data from yarns.

Thematic analysis and Indigenous philosophies and methodologies

Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that thematic analysis, as a data analysis process, could be applied to any study no matter what your discipline or field of work. During data analysis, I soon discovered that there were epistemological, ontological, and axiological conflicts between the use of thematic analysis and our relational worldviews of Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing, especially

while applying Archibald (Q’um Q’um Xiiem) (2008b) Indigenous research methodology of Storywork.

To exacerbate the tensions of pulling out themes, using the data analysis tool NVivo, meant that I inadvertently broke up the stories further, and once again, compromised the relationality of the theories and knowledges contained within those stories—including my responsibility of re-telling those stories to honour the storyteller (Archibald [Q’um Q’um Xiiem], 2008a). I recall constantly having internal struggles and spiritual warfare within myself, over ensuring that I remained true to participant’s stories that they entrusted me with. I wrote in my PhD,

I soon discovered that ontological, epistemological and axiological tensions between thematic analysis and an Indigenous research methodology like Storywork was challenging. Nonetheless, being mindful of such tension assisted in being able to navigate such a challenge while maintaining my cultural obligations and accountabilities. (Parter, 2020, p. 165)

The experience was painful, as I juggled the use of thematic analysis with cultural responsibilities of honouring the knowledges, and the theories, contained in stories, told to me by policy actors. I also had to remind myself of my

Indigeneity and what is culturally expected of Indigenist ways of doing things. I realised that I was viewing things through two different eyes—as reductionist versus holistic (Broadhead & Howard, 2021). Essentially, I was transitioning from my Indigenous to a non-Indigenous worldview of data analysis, in which I was immersing myself. I had to remind myself constantly to give priority to our knowledges and our ways of being, knowing, and doing.

Hence, the purpose of this article is to provide an Indigenous data analysis framework of practice that draws from my lived experiences of data analysis. The work of other Indigenous scholars such as Rigney (1999), Nakata (2007), Archibald (Q'um Q'um Xiiem) (2008a, 2008b), Martin (2008), Wilson (2008), Kovach (2009), Moreton-Robinson (2013), Walter and Anderson (2013), Yunkaporta (2019), and Fredericks et al. (2020) is complemented by my own work that is described in this article.

An Indigenous data analysis methodology

At the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2019 Conference—Research for the 21st Century, when Yunkaporta and Moodie (2019) presented an Indigenous data analysis methodology (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2019), there was extreme excitement among conference participants. An Indigenous colleague and I were excited, because despite researching Indigenous philosophies and research methodologies extensively, we hadn't found any literature that gave us solid grounding to analyse our data from an Indigenous paradigm and standpoint. Yunkaporta and Moodie reiterated this at that Conference.

In my PhD thesis, I cited Mauthner and Doucet (2003) and wrote,

The Indigenist ontological, epistemological and axiological underpinnings of the approach I have just described cannot be separated from the coding, classification and thematic analysis processes that inform the way that I reflect on, analyse and re-tell the stories contained in data that is producing new knowledge. (Parter, 2020, p. 155)

While this is partly true, I underestimated the tensions between Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing, with those of non-Indigenous thematic analysis methods developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). A struggle I colloquially call *the cold wars of the ologies*, involving the silent internal, and often, invisible conflicts, between our Indigenistic cultural worldviews, with those of non-Indigenous frames of reference, of ways of being, knowing and doing. Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020) also confirmed while writing about relationally responsive standpoints:

You incorporate different cultural activities, expressions, images and practices to shape and guide the way you organise knowledge in your research practice, even in your literature review and data analysis. You adapt the stages of cultural processes like weaving, or a Land-based process like the cycle of seasons to inform the structure and spirit of your inquiry. (p. 9)

Kovach (2010) similarly asserts that Indigenous research paradigms should shape not only the choice of methods but how the data are analysed and interpreted.

As Yunkaporta and Moodie (2021) confirm, data analysis and interpretation of when applying Indigenist research methodologies inescapably resort to applying western non-Indigenous research data analysis methods. Astonishingly, there is a lack of writing on Indigenous data analysis methodology. The Kaupapa Māori framework of Aotearoa New Zealand involving the stages of noho puku (self-reflection), whanaungatanga (connection), and kaitiakitanga (guardianship; Elder & Kersten, 2015) goes some way, to resolving these tensions, as does culturally relevant Polynesian approaches of mapping data (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). However, there remains a need to develop this area further, with our article contributing to filling the gap in scholarly knowledge.

So, what should we do?

Indigenous methodologies must emerge from Indigenous ontology to avoid being versions of non-Indigenous approaches to research. Recently post-qualitative inquiry sought to open up possibilities of research from the constraints of the qualitative approach. It challenges the restrictive methodologies of qualitative research, founded on western knowledge perspectives including an assumed dichotomy of objectivity and subjectivity, and alignment with positivist privileging of data (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). Post-qualitative inquiry aims to open research to the emergence of knowledge from within the complexity of actual relationships and dynamics, rather than being completely centred on the uncontextualized human as the nexus of all knowledge (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). While this shift is welcome, post-qualitative inquiry grew from western philosophical traditions and some aspects of the methodology are problematic from a post-colonial perspective. Specifically, the claim of being a *new* approach to knowledge remains based on the linear temporality of colonial modernism. The centring of western theoretical perspectives remains focused on researcher actions, while omitting the relationship of researchers to their participants, to the knowledge itself, and to the political repercussions of methodologies (Gerrard et al., 2017). Post-qualitative inquiry, therefore, remains the very antithesis of an Indigenous paradigm and an Indigenous standpoint with the *cold wars of the ologies* ever present. Indigenous methodologies must be ever-increasing in the academy and elsewhere.

So, what is next?

While research approaches based on a relational and co-generative ontology are welcome, they can never be completely free of the western frameworks they operate within. Therefore, inquiry approaches and knowledge-generating processes that come from and exist within an Indigenous paradigm are urgently needed. Such an approach must be shaped by Indigenous scholars, applied to Indigenous Knowledge-based research, and serve self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. By introducing Indigenous Knowledge-focused approaches to engaging with and analysing data, this

work seeks to open pathways in the undergrowth of academia, stimulating discussion among Indigenous scholars and infusing an Indigenous knowledge paradigm throughout every part of the research process. In the following sections, I combined the Indigenous works of Yunkaporta (2019), Yunkaporta and Moodie (2021), as well as Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020), with my data analysis spiral (Parter, 2020), informed by Creswell's (2013) data analysis spiral, with an Immersification[®] practice, only revealed now, that I developed during my PhD. Thus, the Indigenist paradigm, standpoint, methodology and methods conceptual framework (Parter & Wilson, 2021), is actually known as Carmen's Theory. Carmen's Theory reaffirms Indigenous people's Indigeneity, especially our epistemology or knowing, ontology or being and axiology or doing (Parter, 2020).

Carmen's Theory

Carmen's Theory arose out of a conversation that I had, and I share that story again here:

A few months ago, a colleague asked about the progress of my PhD. With interest, she asked, "What theory are you using?" and exclaimed, "I use realist theory." As I pondered an answer, I wasn't quite sure how to respond! I was thinking, well actually, I am probably using many concepts or maybe theories. When asked again, what theory am I using? I responded, "Carmen's Theory!" and laughed. (C Parter personal journal entry, 30 June 2019)

Despite laughing at the time, little did I realise how relevant my answer was. Indeed, Carmen's Theory, authenticates our Indigeneity, and our Knowledges of cultural ways of knowing, being, and doing. However, as I wrote in my PhD, "In drawing from the many theories and concepts though, ontological, epistemological and axiological challenges are unavoidable When my Indigeneity and standpoint had been authenticated, the challenge of navigating such tensions were minimised but were ever present" (Parter, 2020, p. 94). Essentially, my Indigeneity was at tension with western ontological, epistemological, and axiologies, of thematic analysis. The *cold wars of the ologies* remained throughout the whole data analysis process.

My PhD data analysis journey

As echoed by other scholars, mostly Indigenous, intuitively, I knew that there would be a clash between my Indigenous ontological, epistemological, and axiological worldviews with those of non-Indigenous sciences (Chilisa, 2012; Meyer, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2013, 2015; Nakata, 2007; Rix et al., 2018; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2001, 2008). This is further amplified in public health research, where there is a deliberate absence of requiring researchers to consider their standpoint and positionality, and how such omission influences their worldview during the research process. As a public health practitioner, policy maker, and researcher, I was taught that the only knowledge that matters is knowledge production, where researchers are objective and bring no biases into their research findings. As confirmed by Yunkaporta (2019),

Scientists currently have to remove all traces of themselves from experiments, otherwise their data is considered to be contaminated. Contaminated with what? With the filthy reality of belongingness? The toxic realisation that if we can't stand outside of a field, we can't own it? . . . (p. 49)

Adding that:

I don't see science embracing Indigenous methods of inquiry any time soon, as Indigenous Knowledge is not wanted at the level of *how*, only at the level of *what*, a resource to be plundered rather than a source of knowledge processes. *Show me where some plants are so I can synthesise a compound and make drugs out of it!* [emphasis added]. (p. 49)

Inevitably as Author 4 Wilson (2008) states, "no matter how objective they [researchers] claim their methods and themselves to be, [they] do bring with them their own set of biases. At the very least the choice of research topic and methodology reflects researcher biases" (p. 16). He then cites Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994, p. 3) who importantly point out that: "Psychologists, possibly more than members of any other discipline, have sought to impose their European definition of reality upon the rest of the world" (as cited in Wilson (2008, p. 16)).

Such scientific approaches are contradictory to the worldviews and cultures of Indigenous Australians, especially in the health space where:

Aboriginal culture is the very antithesis of western ideology. The accent on individual commitment, the concept of linear time, the switch in focus from spiritual to worldly, the emphasis on possession and the pricing of goods and services, the rape of the environment and, above all, the devaluing of relationships between people, both within families and within the whole community, as the determinant of social behaviour, are totally at variance with the fundamental belief system of Aboriginal people. Health to Aboriginal people is a matter of determining all aspects of their life, including control over their physical environment, of dignity, of community self-esteem, and of justice. It is not merely a matter of the provision of doctors, hospitals, medicines or the absence of disease and incapacity. (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party, 1989, p. ix)

Basically,

Indigenous methodologies ensure that we acknowledge the fact that we are a part of the field that we are researching. Non-Indigenous methodologies, while acknowledging the uncertainty principle and observer effects, still position the researcher as a god-like and objective viewer hovering outside of the field and imposing interventions from above. (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020, p. 10)

Reductive western knowledge paradigms that separate knower from knowledge have enabled many technological advances coming at a great cost to the people and places they operate within, often with colonial and environmentally damaging practices. The many challenges facing all species, places, and many people, are evidence of the damage of reductive approaches to knowledge and research. To engage with the fullness of the complex multicausality of life, a comprehensive relational approach is needed. Indigenous approaches to both

research and knowledge bring understanding of the internal relationality that is already always occurring, that must be included and considered, indeed embraced, for comprehensive knowledge making endeavours. All dynamics and power relations and effects can then be accounted for, towards avoiding the selective inclusionary and exclusionary practices of many western knowledge approaches. Such inherent relational inclusivity is fundamental to an Indigenous Knowledge paradigm. The complexity of life requires the patterns of relationality to be taken into account within research and knowledge making practices. Throughout time Indigenous Knowledge has incorporated pattern thinking and understanding, as a way to build epistemology aligned with the ontological relationality of life (Yunkaporta, 2019). Patterns-based knowledges can be engaged in research and knowledge making generally, as an Indigenist approach to the relational complexity of life (Brown, 2021).

I remember attending one of Distinguished Professor Moreton-Robinson’s National Indigenous Research and Knowledge Network masterclasses in 2017. There I had a light bulb moment with the simple realisation that every discipline has its own ontological, epistemological, and axiological ways of viewing their reality of knowing, in ways they believe it must be done when producing knowledge. As Distinguished Professor Moreton-Robinson pointed out, a knowledge production process that is dehumanising separates the physical body from the soul and spirit, and looks at the parts and not the whole (A. Moreton-Robinson, 2017, September 7). A research paradigm of value-laden beliefs and assumptions that conflicts with Indigenous relational ways of being, knowing, and doing. Thematic analysis is a case in point.

The separating of pulling apart research participants’ stories, and identifying codes and themes, while using thematic analysis, went against the relationality principles of Storywork. Storywork has a range of cultural obligations when telling participants’ stories reverently and respectfully (Archibald [Q’um Q’um Xiim], 2008a). To reciprocate those stories as honourably as possible, I have a relational accountability to re-tell those stories, including the knowledges, as responsibly as possible (Archibald [Q’um Q’um Xiim], 2008b). These

cultural requirements clashed with non-Indigenous ways of conducting research (Durie, 2004; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008), which then undermined the cultural and community obligations of respectfully being reverent and responsible in our storytelling. This was evident while thematically analysing policy actor’s stories, as I undertook my PhD study.

An Indigenist data analysis framework of practice

In 2019, Yunkaporta and Moodie presented an Indigenous data analysis process. Those present were excited that finally an Indigenous data analysis methodology was emerging, which we thought was unavailable. Yunkaporta and Moodie (2021) published their process in 2021. Expanding on their work, I provide a practical framework for analysing data from an Indigenist paradigm and standpoint and known as the Indigenist Data Analysis Framework of Practice. I also address an earlier gap in Figure 2.

Thought Ritual

Thought Ritual is an Indigenous data analysis methodology developed by Yunkaporta and tested by Moodie in her doctoral study (Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021). Thought Ritual is a superior frame of reference process that draws from concepts of complexity theory, thought experimentation, adaptive systems, and principles of relationality (Yunkaporta, 2019; Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021). Thought Ritual values an Indigenous worldview of ways of being, knowing, and doing across the analytical data process, weaving Indigenous sense-making and knowledge production processes throughout (Yunkaporta, 2019; Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021).

The four stages of Thought Ritual involve connection, diversity, interaction, and adaption (Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021) and are described in Table 1. This living circular to patterns offers scholars a methodology for data analysis from an Indigenist paradigm and standpoint—a relationally responsive standpoint (Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021; Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020).

Table 1. Thought Ritual explained (Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021).

Thought Ritual—living circular2 patterns	
Stages	Descriptor
Stage 1—Connection	Identify the relational pairs of agents (participants), data points, variables, etc. and the networks of pairs these form, and the pairs of networks (i.e. different systems or data sets or thematic categories interacting), using visual modalities to express these relations.
Stage 2—Diversity	Use narrative in collaboration with other participants to identify similarities, differences, and areas of overlap between different variables, agents and data points.
Stage 3—Interaction	Use oral culture metaphors and forms of expression to replicate the exchanges of energy, information or matter between the different agents, variables and data points in the field.
Stage 4—Adaptation	Use supra-rational moments of ancestral connection to identify transformative feedback loops and chains of cause and effect in which data points change, attract change or interact with other data points to produce change events. Time is non-linear in this process, so the changes you perceive might be in past, present or future.

Using Yunkaporta and Moodie’s (2021) work, I expand their methodology by adding a section that puts their descriptors into action, namely the doing of data analysis. As demonstrated in the data analysis spiral, described in my PhD thesis, an Indigenous data analysis methodology goes, back and forward, over and under, and in and out (Parter 1, 2020). A non-linear patterned storytelling with many inter-related parts, connections, and elements requiring researchers to be listener-ready when immersing themselves deeply in the data (Archibald [Q’um Q’um Xiiem], 2008a; Yunkaporta, 2019). I represent such a process through a data analysis spiral (Figure 3) as follows.

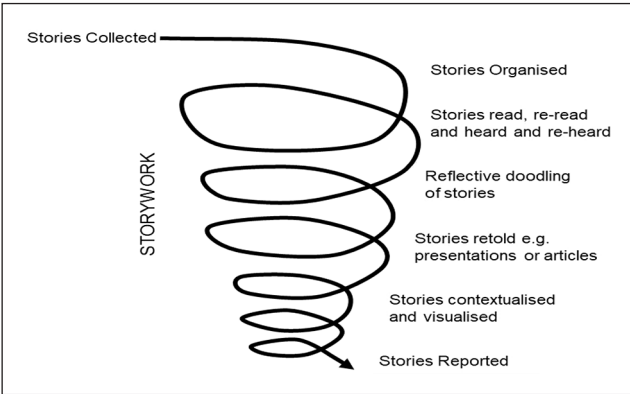


Figure 3. Data analysis spiral from Carmen’s Doctor of Philosophy thesis (Parter, 2020, p. 143).

This data analysis spiral involves the actions to complement the descriptors of Thought Ritual. Combining Thought Ritual and Yunkaporta and Moodie’s (2021) Indigenous data analysis methodology with the data analysis spiral helps to describe the *doing* of data analysis.

The doing of data analysis

Collection and organisation of the stories; reading and re-reading transcriptions; and listening and re-listening to audio recordings and reflective journals; begin the processes of *connection*. Specifically, it is a process of identifying relational pairs, networks of pairs and pairs of networks through visual stories to express the relational connections (Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021). Reflective doodling, including re-telling these stories with others, such as through PowerPoint presentations or manuscripts, begins to contextualise the *diversity* of the patterns and knowledges contained in the stories, involving similarities, differences, and overlaps. The *interactions* of knowledges are when patterns begin to reveal themselves to the researchers, expressed through visual stories or oral metaphorical forms. Deep engagement with the data involving ancestral *something* and visualisation of patterns into reality relates to *adaptation* where chain reactions and feedback loops alter a stated pattern in readiness for reporting findings back to research participants and others (Archibald [Q’um Q’um Xiiem], 2008b; Parter, 2020; Yunkaporta, 2019; Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021; Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020). The doing of data analysis is presented in Table 2, together with Thought Ritual.

Table 2. Thought Ritual and the data analysis spiral demonstrates the doing of data analysis (Parter, 2020; Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021).

Thought Ritual Living circular2 patterns		Data analysis spiral Non-linear patterning
Stages	Descriptor	The doing
Stage 1—Connection	Identify the relational pairs of agents (participants), data points, variables, etc. and the networks of pairs these form, and the pairs of networks (i.e. different systems or data sets or thematic categories interacting), using visual modalities to express these relations.	Collection and organisation of the stories; reading and re-reading the transcribed transcriptions; and listening and re-listening to the audio recording and reflective journals
Stage 2—Diversity	Use narrative in collaboration with other participants to identify similarities, differences and areas of overlap between different variables, agents, and data points.	Reflective doodling including re-telling these stories with others such as through PowerPoint presentations or manuscripts
Stage 3—Interaction	Use oral culture metaphors and forms of expression to replicate the exchanges of energy, information, or matter between the different agents, variables, and data points in the field.	Knowledges are when patterns begin to reveal themselves to the researchers expressed through visual stories or oral metaphorical forms
Stage 4—Adaptation	Use supra-rational moments of ancestral connection to identify transformative feedback loops and chains of cause and effect in which data points change, attract change or interact with other data points to produce change events. Time is non-linear in this process, so the changes you perceive might be in past, present or future.	Deep engagement with the data involving ancestral “something” and visualisation of patterns into reality

Immersification®: the practice of immerse, immersive, immersing, and immersion

The Indigenous data analysis process described above involves a profound Immersification® process that I experienced when undertaking data analysis during my research project while undertaking a PhD course. Immersification® is a term I use to describe the use of mental, cognitive, and spiritual practices to engage researchers in alternative and new realities of deep sense-making when creating new knowledge. Immersification® consists of immerse, immersive, immersing, and immersion. The copyrighting of Immersification®, comprising of the four Is of, immerse, immersive, immersing, and immersion, has been deliberately used here, so as to protect the knowledges, obtained from our Indigenous knowledge systems, that are often appropriated, and commercialised, by western sciences of ownership.

To *immerse* and then locate oneself in the connection process reaffirms and reiterates the doing of data analysis, described above (Parter, 2020; Yunkaporta & Moodie, 2021). Diversity is an *immersive* process of generating a three-dimensional image that appears to surround the researcher. Importantly, diversity involves re-telling the stories, their elements and relationships concerning similarities, differences, and overlaps involving yarnning with others, especially the participants, to produce communal oral knowledge. To become completely engrossed, and absorbed in the interaction process of *immersing*, is about, examining all the in-between parts, at a much greater and spiritually conscious level, to identify and create patterns of reality, where new knowledge begins to be contextualised. Adaptation involves immersion, where deep mental and spiritual ancestral involvement in *something*, begins to bring the new communal and ancestral oral knowledges, and their content into visual reality. Often, at this point in the data analysis process, the missing part is spirit (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020).

According to Meyer (2008),

Spirit as knowing is a *real idea* that allows us to ritualize ways to collect medicine, read text, prepare a meal, or communicate with family. It allows knowing to be an act of consciousness that reaches beyond the mundane into connection and alignment with an essence that finds its renewal throughout generations. (pp. 3–4; emphasis in original work)

Meyer (2008) adds, “This higher reach of knowing collapsed under the weight of homogeneity and assimilation—around the world,” further emphasising, “It must right itself through our engagement to secure our survival” (p. 4).

Spiritually remains an important part of Immersification® where the *something*—our ancestral beings of knowers, impart knowledges through the dreaming. I often woke in the early hours of the morning, where I would commune silently with my ancestors—my spiritual teachers (Parter & Wilson, 2021). As hooks (1999) writes, “such an authentic spiritual experience [that centres love in the work that we do] is not a naïve experience. It does not lead one away from reality but allows us to accept the real more fully” (pp. 119–120).

Immersification® expressed in Carmen’s data analysis spiral

I now adapt my data analysis spiral to reflect the Immersification® process of practice containing immerse, immersive, immersing, and immersion (Figure 4).

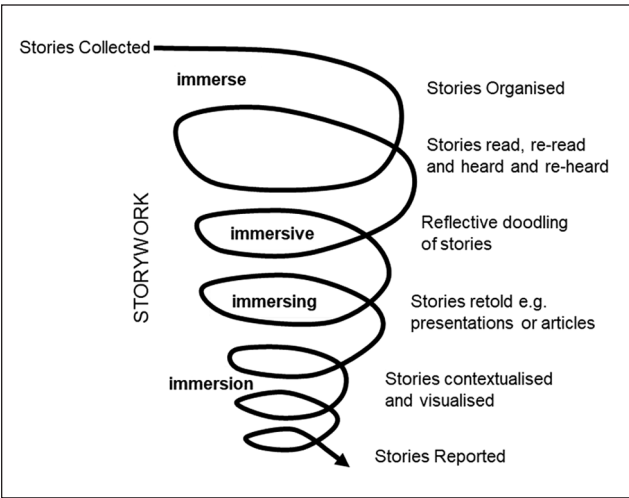


Figure 4. Adaptation of Carmen’s data analysis spiral to reflect Immersification®.

Immersification®, Thought Ritual, and the Data Analysis Spiral collectively form the Indigenist data analysis framework of practice, which is summarised in Table 3. Consequently, communal and ancestral oral knowledges—original knowledge—are developed.

Table 3. An Indigenist data analysis framework of practice is summarised.

An Indigenist data analysis framework of practice			
Immersification®	Thought Ritual methodology Living circular2 patterns		Data analysis spiral Non-linear patterning
	Stages	Descriptor	The doing
Immerse—To immerse and then locate oneself in the connection process reaffirms the collecting, organising, reading and re-reading transcripts, listening and re-listening to the audios accompanied by reflective doodling so as to identify groupings of pairs, network of pairs and pairs of networks	Stage 1—Connection	Identify the relational pairs of agents (participants), data points, variables, etc. and the networks of pairs these form, and the pairs of networks (i.e. different systems or data sets or thematic categories interacting), using visual modalities to express these relations.	Collection and organisation of the stories; reading and re-reading the transcribed transcripts; and listening and re-listening to the audio recording and reflective journals
Immersive—Diversity is an immersive process of generating a three-dimensional image that appears to surround the researcher. Importantly, diversity involves the re-telling of the stories, their elements and relationships concerning similarities, differences, and overlaps involving Yarning with others especially the participants to produce communal oral knowledge	Stage 2—Diversity	Use narrative in collaboration with other participants to identify similarities, differences, and areas of overlap between different variables, agents, and data points.	Reflective doodling including re-telling these stories with others such as through PowerPoint presentations or manuscripts
Immersing—To become completely engrossed and absorbed in the interaction process of immersing is about examining all the in-between parts at a much greater and spiritually conscious level to identify and create patterns of reality and this is where the new knowledge begins to be contextualised	Stage 3—Interaction	Use oral culture metaphors and forms of expression to replicate the exchanges of energy, information or matter between the different agents, variables, and data points in the field.	Knowledges are when patterns begin to reveal themselves to the researchers expressed through visual stories or oral metaphorical forms
Immersion—Adaptation involving immersion is where deep mental and spiritual ancestral involvement in ‘something’ begins to bring the new communal and ancestral oral knowledges and their content into visual reality. Often, ‘the missing part is spirit’	Stage 4—Adaptation	Use supra-rational moments of ancestral connection to identify transformative feedback loops and chains of cause and effect in which data points change, attract change, or interact with other data points to produce change events. Time is non-linear in this process, so the changes you perceive might be in past, present, or future.	Deep engagement with the data involving ancestral “something” and visualisation of patterns into reality
Communal and Ancestral Original Oral Knowledges developed			

Discussion

In relation to the earlier gap contained in the conceptual figure about an Indigenist paradigm, standpoint, and methodological and methods approach (Figure 2) (Parter & Wilson, 2021), I now make the following amendment and

add to the conceptual framework a text box that contains an Indigenist data analysis framework of practice. I amended the final text box to represent the creation of original communal and ancestral oral knowledge production. This final piece of work completes the conceptual framework that I now claim as Carmen’s Theory (Figure 5).

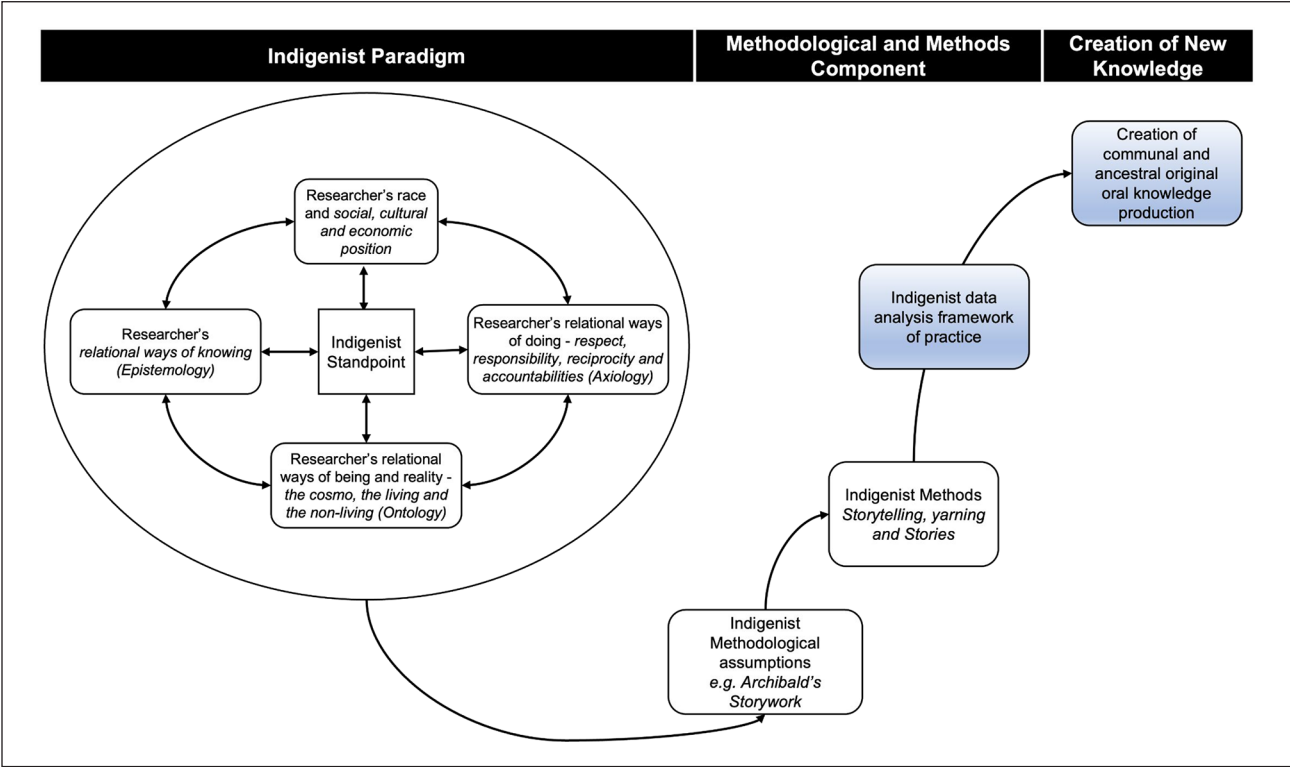


Figure 5. Adaptation to Parter’s work, now known as Carmen’s Theory (Parter & Wilson, 2021).

This Indigenist data analysis framework of practice offers researchers, especially Indigenous researchers, a tool to analyse data, while honouring and valuing our Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing. Given this, we no longer need to resort to a western data analysis process, as I did when applying thematic analysis in my PhD study. Because applying thematic analysis, inadvertently broke up the stories where the knowledges and theories contained in those stories were being potentially lost. Also, the internal conscious and spiritual turmoil I experienced while analysing my PhD data, will be minimised and perhaps avoid the *cold wars of the ologies*. Critically, it restores the centring of Indigenous knowledges, and Indigenous cultures of ways of being, ways of knowing, and ways of doing, into the data analysis process that is commensurate with how we learn and teach others.

This framework of practice has the potential to be applicable to non-Indigenous contexts as well. More significantly, this framework of practice can be applied to other forms of inquiry involving data collected from Indigenous communities for the development of policies, programmes, and services. I will use Carmen’s Theory, for example, as I undertake systemic inquiry work aimed at changing system impediments that sustain social and well-being inequalities and health disparities facing Indigenous Australians.

Conclusion

In this article, I have provided my experiences of applying thematic analysis while analysing my PhD data that was at tension with Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and

doing. We briefly explained these tensions between the worldviews of non-Indigenous western and Indigenous sciences. Drawing from an earlier piece of scholarly work that was written about an Indigenist paradigm and Indigenist standpoint (Parter & Wilson, 2021), an anomaly that I encountered has been resolved; adjustments to that earlier work to include an Indigenist data analysis framework of practice in Carmen’s conceptual theory. An Indigenous data analysis framework of practice built from the work of Yunkaporta (2019), Yunkaporta and Moodie (2019, 2021), Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020), and combined with Carmen’s work of a data analysis spiral—the doing of analysis—with an Immersification[®] process of practice involving immerse, immersive, immersing, and immersion is fully described. The lessons from Carmen’s PhD of her experiences undertaking data analysis from an Indigenous paradigm and standpoint will resonate with others. The Indigenous data analysis framework of practice will add value to addressing the gap in our scholarly knowledge of maintaining and restoring Indigenous peoples’ ways of knowing, being, and doing, in the research data analysis processes.

Authors’ note

Carmen Parter (PhD) is a proud Aboriginal woman from Juru & Darumbal clans of the Birra Gubba Nation with South Sea Island heritage. She has been a volunteer, clinician, educator, policy maker, manager of project teams, a senior executive leader, theorist, and scholar. Presently, Carmen is the Girudala CEO, a community-controlled organisation, is on the Board of the Australian Health Practitioner Agency and works as an Associate Professor at Djurali Centre with two other Honorary/Adjunct Associate Professor appointments at Macquarie University and

University of New South Wales. She is a Fellow of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives, and a Fellow of the Public Health Association of Australia, who also received an international Indigenous Inquiry emerging researcher award in 2022. Carmen is a Granny, and Aunty to many, and lives on Country with her partner.

Shae Brown (PhD) is a grandmother who lives on Bundjalung Country, in Australia. Arriving as a 10-year-old with her family, she was acutely aware of being on someone else's land and felt the history in the living patterning of the land around her. This experience seeded a resolve to contribute in some way. While teaching secondary education, Shae developed and implemented a patterns-based educational approach and strategy, called Complexity Patterning, to enable learning and becoming as a broadly relational dynamic. The curriculum was expanded by being taught *through* the approach. Her doctorate explored the relationship of Complexity Patterning to pattern understanding in Indigenous Knowledge, complexity science and quantum physics. Currently Shae is affiliated with the Laszlo Institute of New Paradigm Research and is designing a whole education system based in a patterning and relational understanding of life.

Elizabeth Florence Rix (RN, BN, PhD) is a nurse/researcher living on Bundjalung Country, New South Wales Australia. Her experience as a kidney care nurse was the origin and motivation for her doctoral studies, which focused on reducing daily experiences of racism and the lack of culturally safe treatment and care for First Nations Peoples receiving dialysis in rural New South Wales, Australia. Elizabeth was fortunate to be supported by Bundjalung Elders, renal patients and Aboriginal Health Workers to guide her in completing this PhD research. She now works with First Nations and white researchers on the AKtion (Aboriginal Kidney Care Improving Outcomes Together) at the University of Adelaide, South Australia as a research fellow. Elizabeth's research interests include Antiracism, Indigenous health, Critical reflexivity, Cultural Safety, Indigenous research methods, and improving mainstream health services for Aboriginal people.

Shawn Wilson (PhD) from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, northern Canada lives on Syilx territory in Kelowna, British Columbia. He is Associate Professor of Indigenous Studies, co-ordinating the Indigenous Knowledges Theme at the University of British Columbia. Shawn has worked with Indigenous people worldwide and co-leads a research project aiming to define rules and guidelines for respecting and safeguarding sacred teachings, such as Ceremonial and Star Knowledge. He has spent time living, teaching, and researching across Canada, the USA, Australia, and Norway, along with supervising research projects in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Shawn is the author of *Research is Ceremony*, which has sold out multiple printings. He is on the Board of Directors with the Tapestry Institute and has joined the newly established advisory group at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. Shawn has presented at Goals House (Davos) as part of the World Economic Forum and the MIR Centre for Peace. He cites his three kids as his greatest achievement, pride, and joy.

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ORCID iDs

Carmen Parter  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4047-158X>

Shae Brown  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6999-6000>

Elizabeth Florence Rix  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2062-5070>

Shawn Wilson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1123-0165>

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Glossary

kaitiakitanga	guardianship
noho puku	self-reflection
Murri	Aboriginal people from Queensland, Australia
whanaungatanga	connection

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