



Dementia Networking
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*Yarning – A Culturally safe
method of
Indigenous conversation*

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*Welcome Everyone
Come lets yarn*



A Short Yarn About Me

Bardi

Yindjibarndi

Social Worker

Researcher

Now living in
Perth

Western Australia regions

- 1 Perth
- 2 Margaret River & South West
- 3 Australia's Coral Coast
- 4 Broome & North West
- 5 Australia's Golden Outback



SESSION AIMS

- Discuss the definition of yarning
- Understand the context to using yarning
- Learn about different types of yarning
- Discuss the benefits of using yarning
- Questions

What Is Yarning?

Yarning is an informal conversation that is culturally friendly and recognised by Aboriginal people as meaning to talk about something, someone or provide and receive information.

Why Use Yarning?

- To talk informally to someone to share information or find out about something that we are interested in knowing about
- To yarn with a purpose such as in an interview. This is *a yarn with a purpose*. The purpose being to find out about something. Can be exploring why an individual thinks, feels, and behaves the way they do. (1)
- There are many different contexts for conducting interviews:
 - Job
 - Medical
 - Education
 - Research
- This session will look at different types of yarning and when they are useful.

Yarning as a tool for engaging Aboriginal people

- An Indigenous form of conversation
- Is part of Indigenous pedagogy (teaching)
- Builds on the oral tradition (genre) of handing down information
- Informal and relaxed way of gathering information
- Involves sharing information through the telling of stories (narrative)

Aboriginal people's conversations often take the form of a story when replying to a question. They may start off answering a question but then may slip into a story which might seem totally unrelated; but the story is the reply to the question or topic being explored

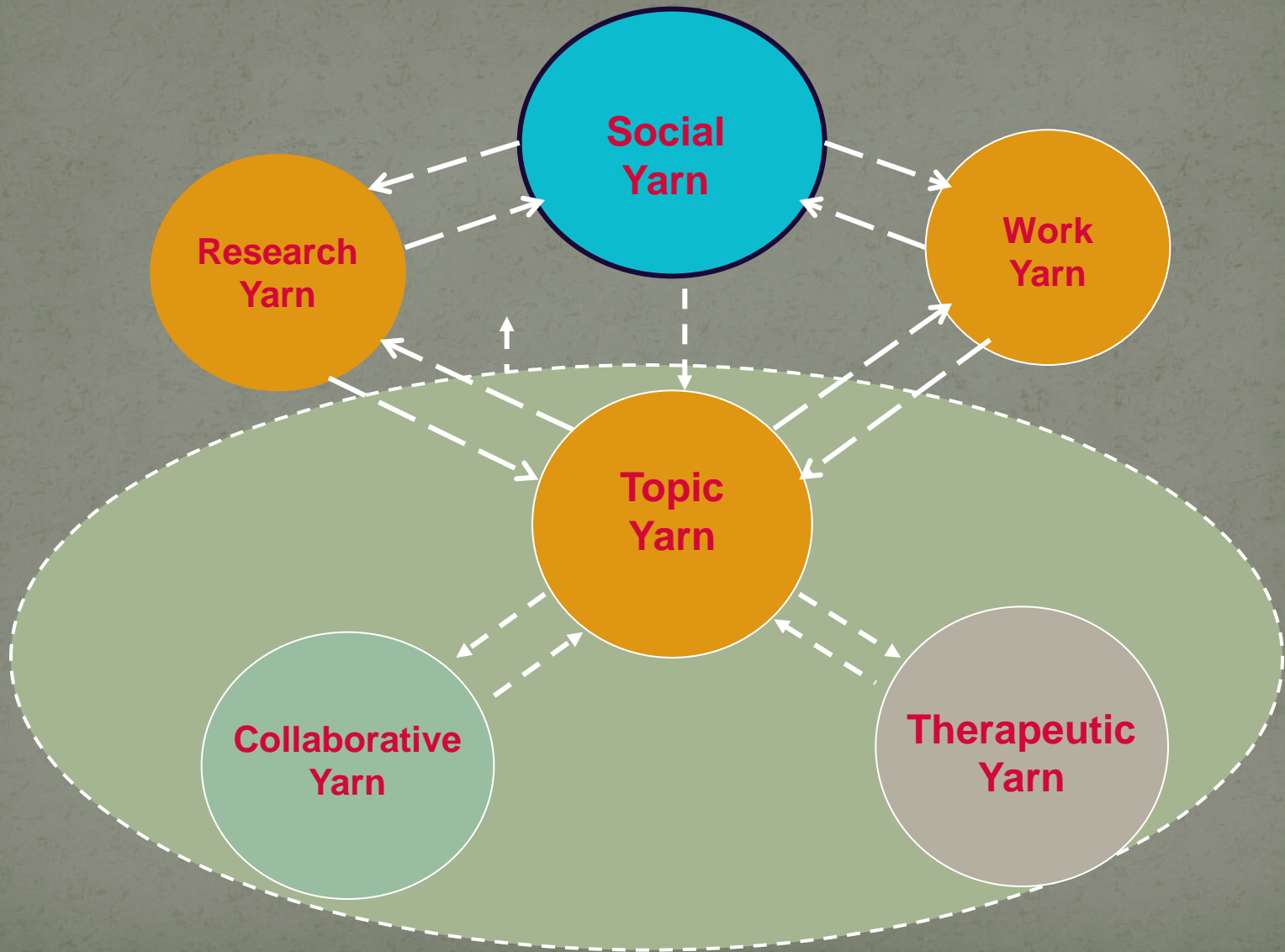
Yarning

- Has it's own convention and style as a type of conversation
- Can sometimes be messy and meandering
- Weaves in and out of the research story
- Has protocols in relation to the participant; especially Elders

Different types of Yarning

- Social yarn
- Research, Work or Topic yarn
- Collaborative yarn
- Therapeutic yarn

Yarning Process



Social Yarn

- Precedes or takes place before the research or work/topic yarn
- This stage is the relationship building stage.
 - Trust is developing and the relationship is being built.
 - When people do not know each other this stage is very important to the process as people are still deciding whether you can be trusted.
 - This is the getting to know you or catching up stage if two people have not seen each other for sometime.
 - Through the social yarn the worker becomes accountable.
- Is informal and often unstructured
 - Often follows a meandering course that is guided by the topic that both people choose to introduce into the discussion.
 - Weaves in and out of whatever is being discussed
- Can include gossip, news, humour, advice
 - Whatever information both parties feel inclined to share in the moment.

Social Yarn

- Introduce yourself
- Engage with the other person and have a social yarn about something.
- At some point introduce the purpose of your being there.
- End the social yarn by stating why you are there and move into the topic yarn.

Research/Topic or Work Yarn

- Is similar to an un or semi structured interview. You may have some areas that you want to explore or ask the person.
- It is a yarn with a purpose:
 - To either gather information or
 - Inform the person about work related business.
- In research:
 - the researcher is interested in a person's story about their experience or knowledge of something.
- As a worker:
 - you may be interested in finding out what the person knows, what they have been doing or what their issues are.
 - You may also be there to provide the person with specific information.
- Yarning is interactive, inclusive and a two way process.
- While the research/topic or work can appear to be relaxed or informal it is important to remember that you are there for a purpose.
- The yarn has a beginning, middle and an end.
- This is a yarn with a purpose. The purpose is to obtain or relay information relating to the research or work topic.

Collaborative yarning

- Occurs between two or more people who are actively engaged in sharing information about research or work related project. Is often a discussion about ideas and or an issue.
- Can involve exploring similar or bouncing different ideas in explaining new concepts or problem solving around an issue.
- The sharing of research or work findings can lead to new discoveries and or different understandings of a topic.
- Can result in doing something differently.

Therapeutic Yarning

- Can take place during the research/topic or work yarn where the individual in telling their story discloses information that is traumatic or intensely personal and emotional.
- The researcher/worker's role is to switch from asking about the research/work topic to the role of a listener where the individual is supported in giving voice to their story and is assisted to make sense or have their story affirmed.
- The meaning making emerging in the yarn can empower and support the participant to re-think their understanding of their experience in new and different ways.
- This type of yarn is **not** a counseling yarn it is a yarn that acknowledges the person's story.
- Can be very important to both the person, researcher and the worker.
 - May be the first time that this person has ever told this part of their story.
 - Can be empowering for both.
 - Enables the worker and or researcher to provide some direction to the person. Eg. Counselling.

Challenges in using yarning

- Knowing when to draw the yarn to a close.
 - Putting a time limit on the yarn is one way to manage this by letting the individual know that you will talk for a prescribed time.
- Can result in huge amounts of data/information being collected, which means long hours spent transcribing or note writing.
- Going off track and yarning about other things
- Interviewing elders who may go off track in the yarn and knowing when to steer them back without offending.
- Can be messy (7) and meander all over the place, not stick to the topic.
- Seems like you are talking about everything else except the topic.

Gender Issues

- Be mindful of gender issues that can emerge during or before the yarning process
- Put some strategies in place to address them, should they arise
- Is this something you should negotiate with the participant/individual before or during the social yarn.
- Shame – person might not want to say something personal if the other person is a different gender.
- Age differences:
 - This could become an issue if the person is older than the worker or researcher
 - Younger worker/researcher interviewing an elder.
 - Raise issues of authority and expertise.

Strengths in using Yarning

- Facilitates thick description – in that you get a lot of detail
- Indigenous people are able to talk freely about their experiences
- Enables the researcher/worker to explore the topic in more depth resulting in information emerging that more formal processes may not facilitate.
- Is conducive to Indigenous way of doing things; its strength is in the cultural security that it creates for Indigenous people.
- Is a process that cuts across the formality of identities as a researcher/worker and demands the human to human interaction.

Importance of Stories/Narratives

- Stories or narratives are another genre that can be applied to exploring or finding out about people's experience of a specific situation. They can be used to:
 - explore behaviours, values and perspectives, seek a better understanding, and consider options
 - examine the impact of social factors on individual identity (e.g. ethnicity, poverty, sexuality, racism, location and religion)
 - examine and challenge existing power relations within social relationships and social institutions
 - identify and address barriers that limit people's opportunities, participation, benefits and access to services

Structure of Stories

- Stories have a beginning, a middle and an end
- Unlike a traditional structured interview or survey, narrative/stories assumes little regarding the issues that are likely to emerge. (1)
- Where surveys and interviews assume possible solutions and the questions are crafted to explore these assumptions. Narrative /stories are more open-ended— frequently revealing unexpected and important results.
- Stories reveal the tellers experience of an event.

Importance to Aboriginal people

- Story telling has always been a part of the Aboriginal oral tradition.
- Stories were used to teach children
- Stories were used to hand down knowledge
- Stories were used to impart information.
- Stories formed part of the Aboriginal cosmology; the dreaming stories informed people of how the world was created, set the protocols for behaviour and outlined responsibilities.
- Working with stories is a culturally friendly and safe process for Aboriginal people
- Stories teach you to listen

Points to be mindful of when organising a Yarning session

- **Behaviours** -what a person has done or is doing.
- **Opinions/values** -what a person thinks about the topic.
- **Feelings** -what a person feels rather than what a person thinks.
- **Knowledge** -to get facts about the topic.
- **Sensory** -what people have seen, touched, heard, tasted or smelled.
- **Background/demographics** -standard background questions, such as age, education, etc. (2) –

Preparing for an interview or yarn

- Identify the topic or purpose for the yarn; what do you want to know about and why.
- Develop a yarning guide or process
 - Semi – structured yarn/interview or
 - Unstructured or in-depth yarn/interview
- Recruit or contact the individual to arrange to have a yarn
 - This could involve a phone call
 - Visit to the person's place
 - Decide on the number of meetings.
 - Arrange time to meet for the first research/work yarn.

Yarning Circles

- Group Process
- Let people know how the circle will operate
- Have some basic ground rules
 - Not looking for consensus
 - Its okay to have a different point of view
 - Its okay to disagree
 - No right or wrong
 - Everyone has a turn
 - Confidentiality
- Have a yarning guide to facilitate the discussion
- Let people respond to your prompts.
- Avoid talking too much and let the yarning circle process kick in.

Questions?



References

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