DATA+SOUL
RESEARCH

(Re)Imagining our work with data to be more equitable, transformative, *and full of soul*

Min Ma

2025 CQI Conference

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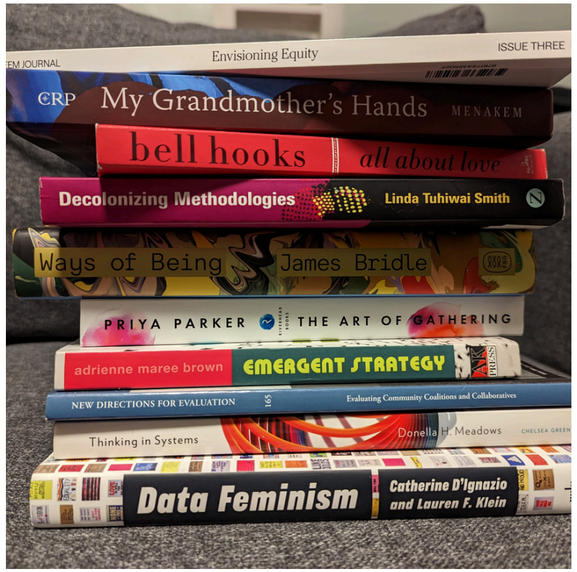
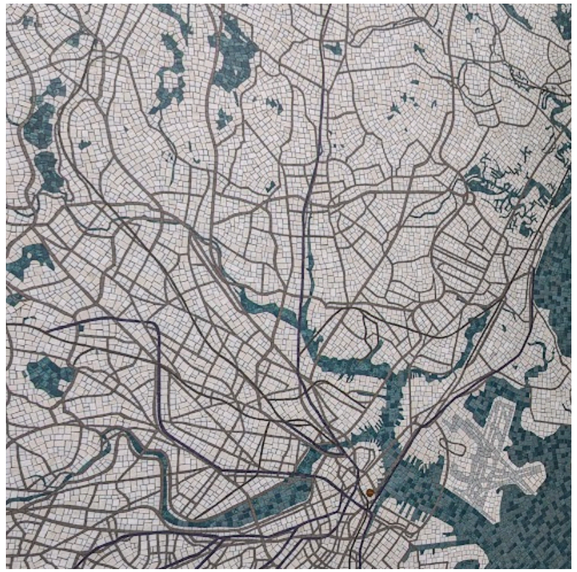

Envisioning Equity
ISSUE THREE
My Grandmother's Hands
MENAKEM
bell hooks
all about love
Decolonizing Methodologies
Linda Tuhiwai Smith
Ways of Being
James Bridle
PRIYA PARKER
THE ART OF GATHERING
adrienne maree brown
EMERGENT STRATEGY
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR EVALUATION
Evaluating Community Coalitions and Collaboratives
Thinking in Systems
Donella H. Meadows
Data Feminism
Catherine D'Ignazio
and Lauren F. Klein



PRINCIPLES:
THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT
COMMUNICATION + DISSEMINATION
ANALYSIS + INTERPRETATION
SCOPING + DESIGN
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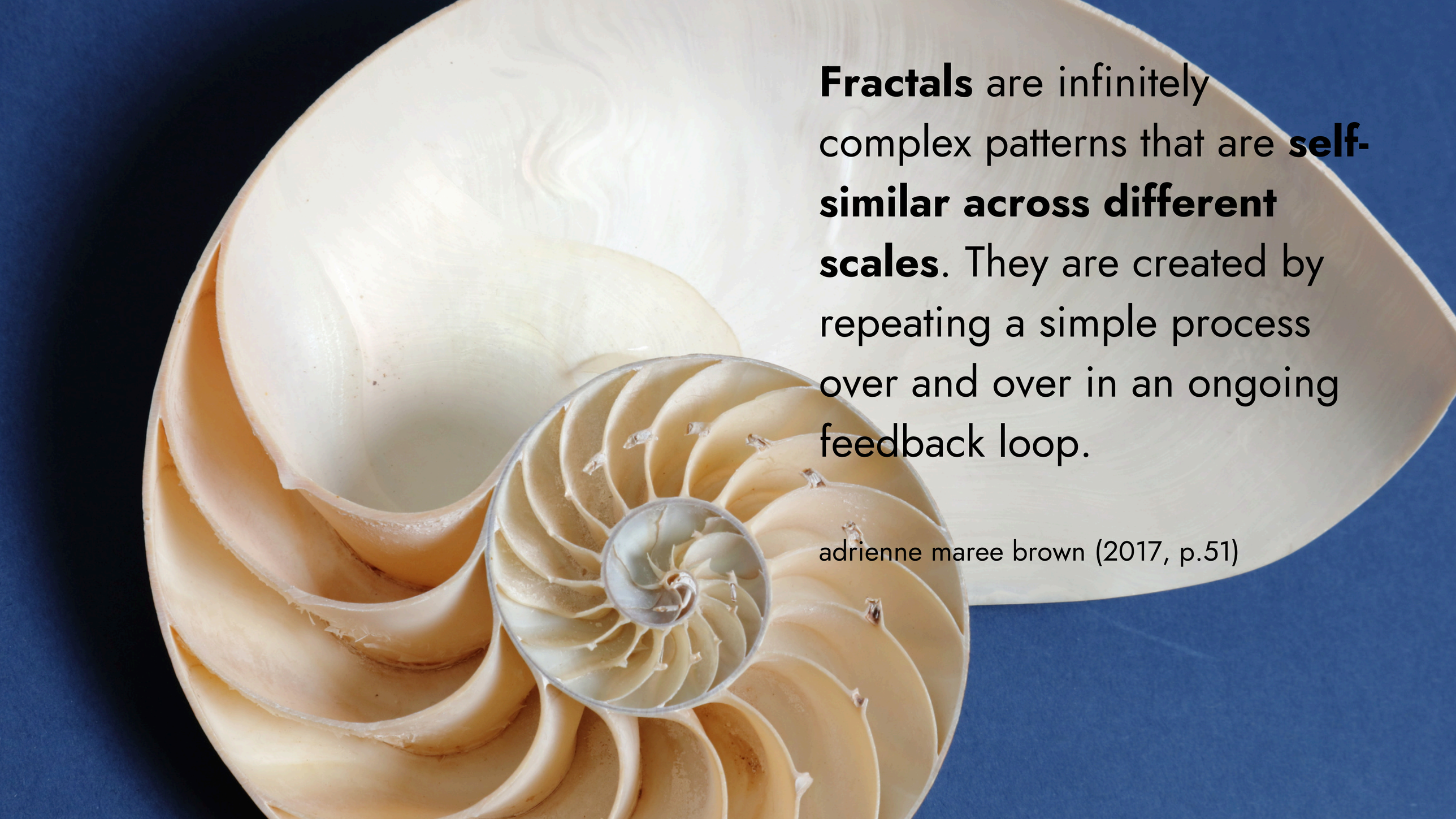

Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are **self-similar across different scales**. They are created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing feedback loop.

adrienne maree brown (2017, p.51)

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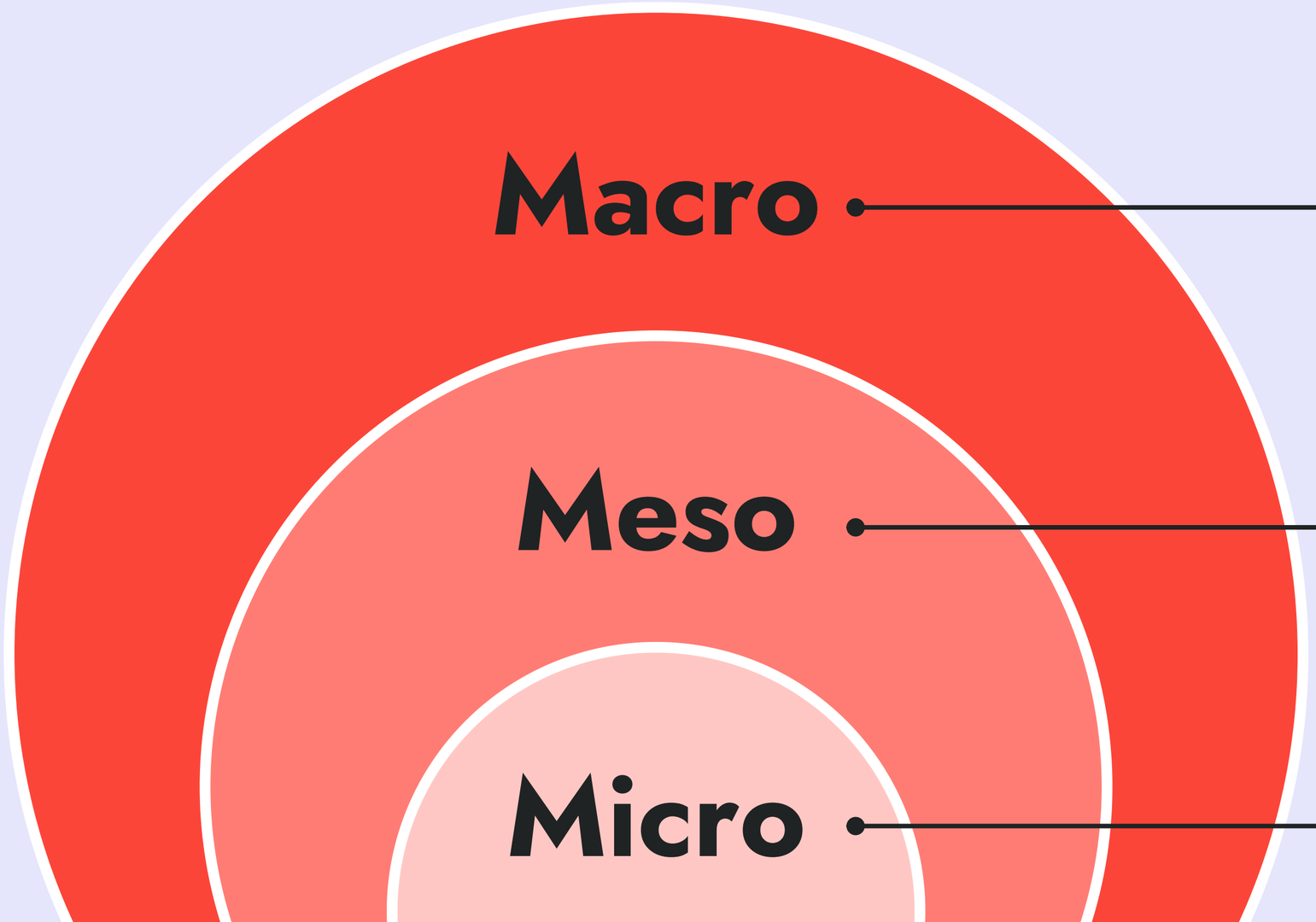

Marketplace
Laws and policies
Profession

Funders
Collaborators
Community
Organization
Contracts
Education/Training

Team
Self

(Gates et al., 2022)

Part

1

Start with ourselves

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Data always comes from a perspective

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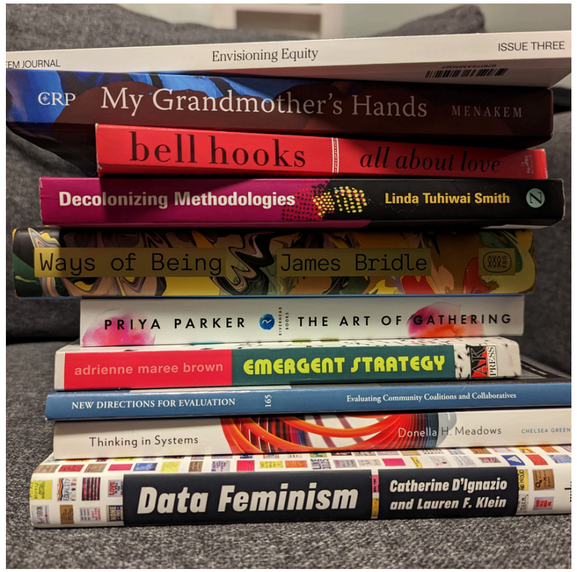

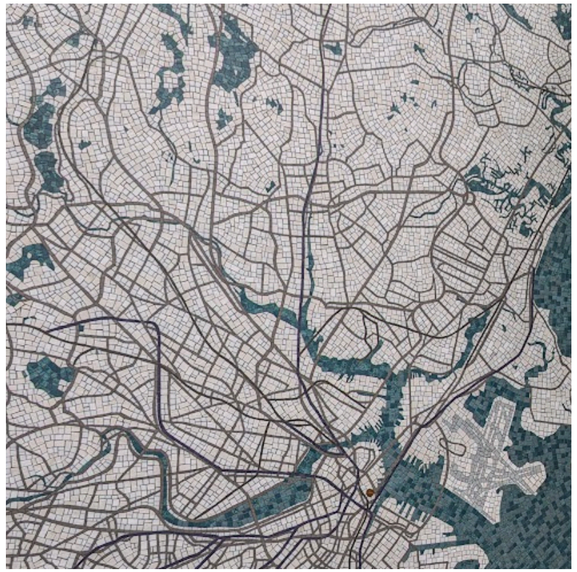

What identities do I bring to my work?

How do different forms of expertise show up?
(eg, lived, professional, academic)

Personal self
Professional self
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ASK:

What assets, interests, and gifts does your team bring to this work?

What lenses, biases, and perspectives do you/they bring?

What perspectives are missing?

PRINCIPLES:
Multiple Truths,
Humans > Data

Supporting tools for surfacing blind spots

- **Social Identity Map** (Jacobson and Mustafa, 2019)
- **Journey Maps** (Hoff and Benitez Alvarez, 2023)

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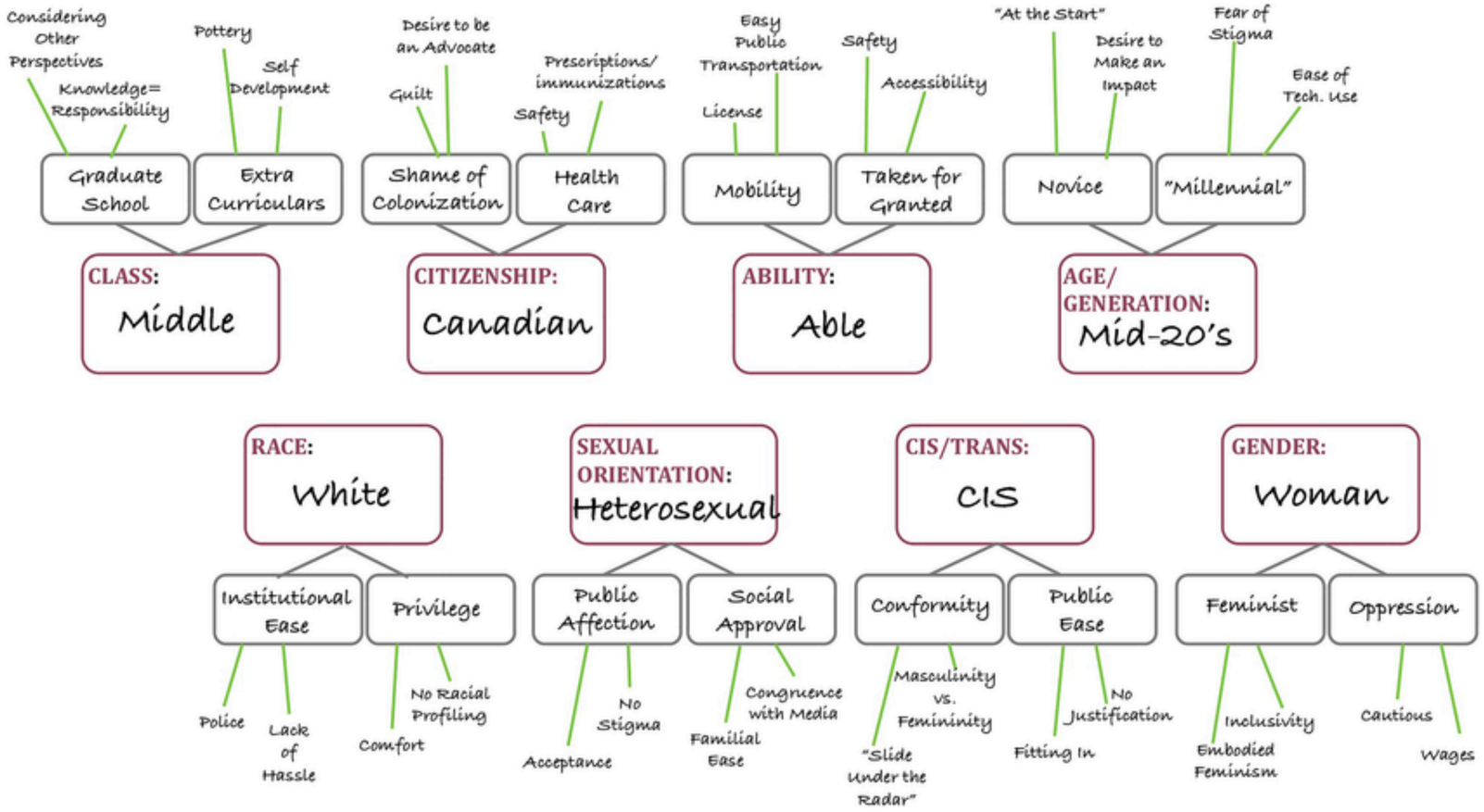
Social Identity Map

Jacobson and Mustafa (2019)



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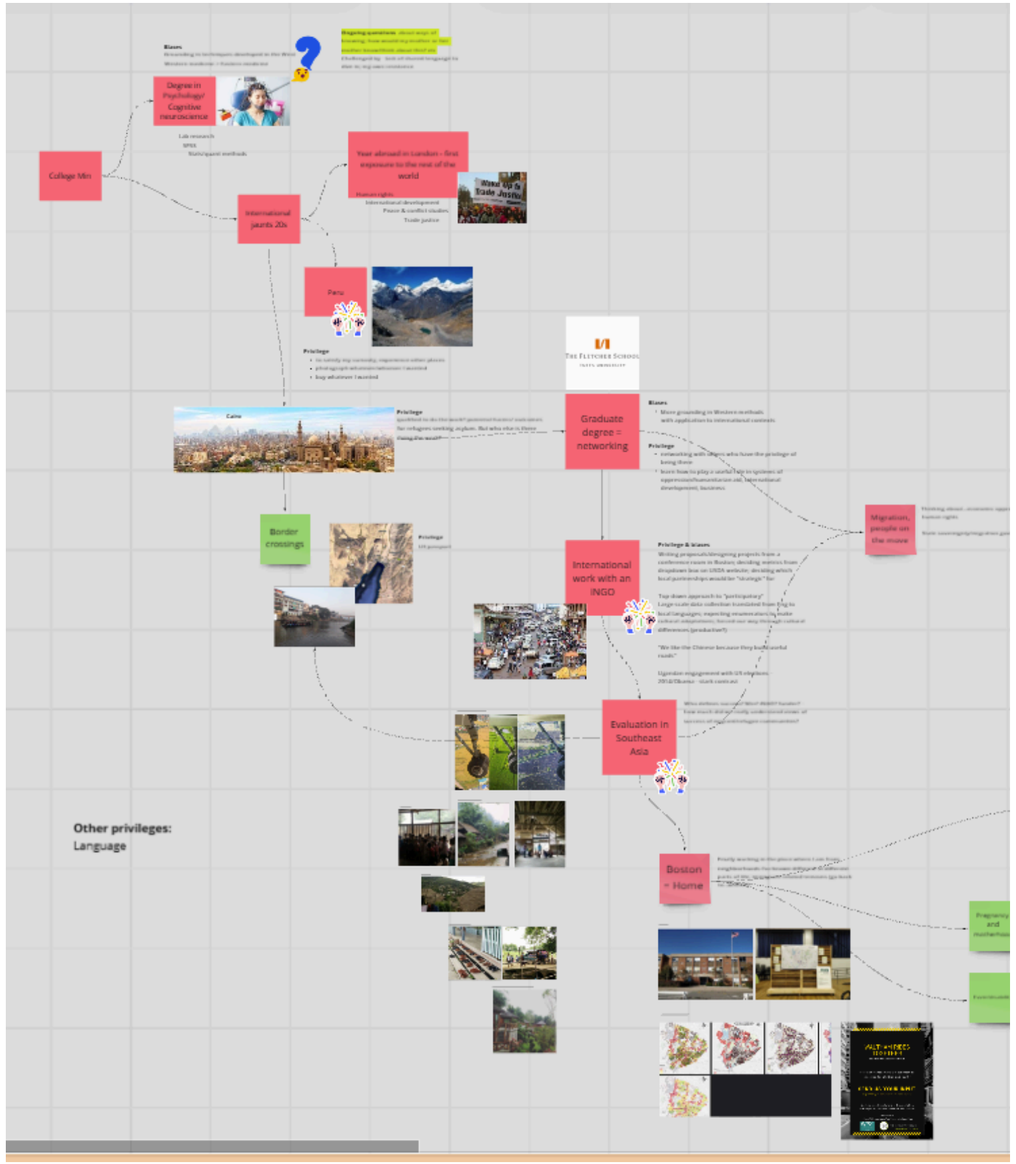
Journey Maps

Hoff and Benitez-Alvarez (2023)



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Supporting tools for surfacing blind spots

- **Social Identity Map** (Jacobson and Mustafa, 2019)
- **Journey Maps** (Hoff and Benitez Alvarez, 2023)
- ...???

How does this show up in your practice?

What are your tools?

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Part

1

Start with ourselves

Add your questions to Whova or upvote someone else's

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Part

2

Our teams

THE WHAT

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"...the tools of statistics and data science don't carry inherent biases towards a worldview or group, but as soon as people get involved, they start making choices that — if unexamined — reinforce their own perspective in a way that affects the data outcomes and by extension the decisions or actions based on them. It's how you use the hammer that matters."

— WE ALL COUNT

How does our understanding of systems, power, and context influence our work with data?

Some ideas to get us started...

- **Theory and questions**
- **Data sources:** Who and how we ask

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Coalition of domestic violence agencies

Data collection

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Coalition of domestic violence agencies

Data collection

ASK:

How can participants benefit from sharing with you?

How can you make this interview/focus group a joyful experience?

PRINCIPLE:
Humans > Data

WHAT IS THIS DATA CARE PACKAGE ALL ABOUT?

We created **"data care packages"** to **send care your way**: share our findings from last year, a gift card, treats, and postcards so you can offer your feedback about **[PROGRAM]**.

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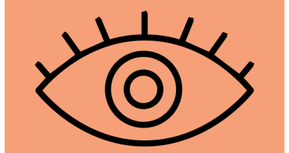
Your Experience

Draw or write about your experience receiving [Program] services.

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

A calming technique that connects you with the present by exploring the five senses.



5

things you can see

4

things you can touch

3

things you can hear

2

things you can smell

1

thing you can taste

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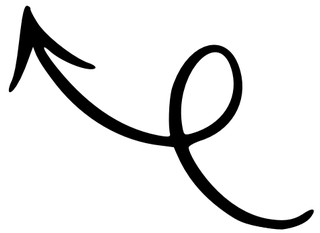
What shifted?

- ✓ **Experience of participants**
- ✓ **Extraction vs generation**
- ✓ **Quality of data**



Coalition of domestic violence agencies

Data collection

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PRINCIPLE:
Humans > Data

Data Equity Deck

Data+Soul Research (2022)

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Rich pictures

Tool for diagramming a system
Map actors; connecting threads

Each represents a certain perspective;
can show different realities depending on your view and the perspective you choose to take

System Diagrams (Williams, 2001)

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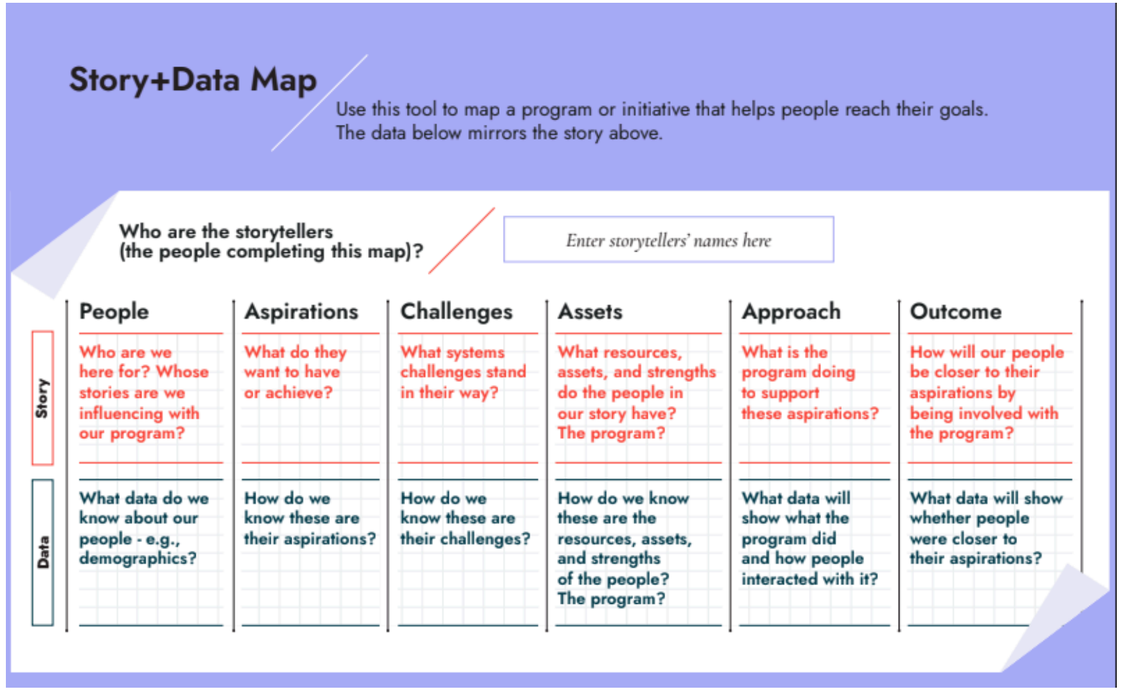
Story+Data Map

Centers people > programs
Reframes the story and corresponding data

- **Design a program**
- **Build an evaluation plan**
- **Align on shared purpose**



Data+Soul (2025)

Story+Data Map

	People	Aspirations	Challenges	Assets	Approach	Outcome
Story	Who are we here for? Whose stories are we influencing with our program?	What do they want to have or achieve?	What systems challenges stand in their way?	What resources, assets, and strengths do the people in our story have? The program?	What is the program doing to support whese aspirations?	How will our people be closer to their aspirations by being involved with the program?
Data	What data do we know about our people - e.g., demographics?	How do we know these are their aspirations?	How do we know these are their challenges?	How do we know these are the resources, assets, and strengths of the people? The program?	What data will show what the program did and how people interacted with it?	What data will show whether people were closer to their aspirations?

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Part

2

Our teams

THE WHAT

Add your questions to Whova or upvote someone else's

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Part

3

Our teams

THE HOW

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How do project leaders navigate team perspectives and lived experience within this context?

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ASK:

How are you defining expertise and who holds it?

PRINCIPLES:
Multiple Truths,
Shared Work + Knowledge

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What made this possible?

✓**Team time**

✓**Internal “how”**

Coalition of domestic violence agencies

Data collection

ASK:

How can participants benefit from sharing with you?

How can you make this interview/focus group a joyful experience?

PRINCIPLE:
Humans > Data

Think of a time

when a conversation led you to interpret data in an entirely different way.

What created room for this conversation to happen?

What difference did it make?

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Part

3

Our teams

THE HOW

Add your questions to Whova or upvote someone else's

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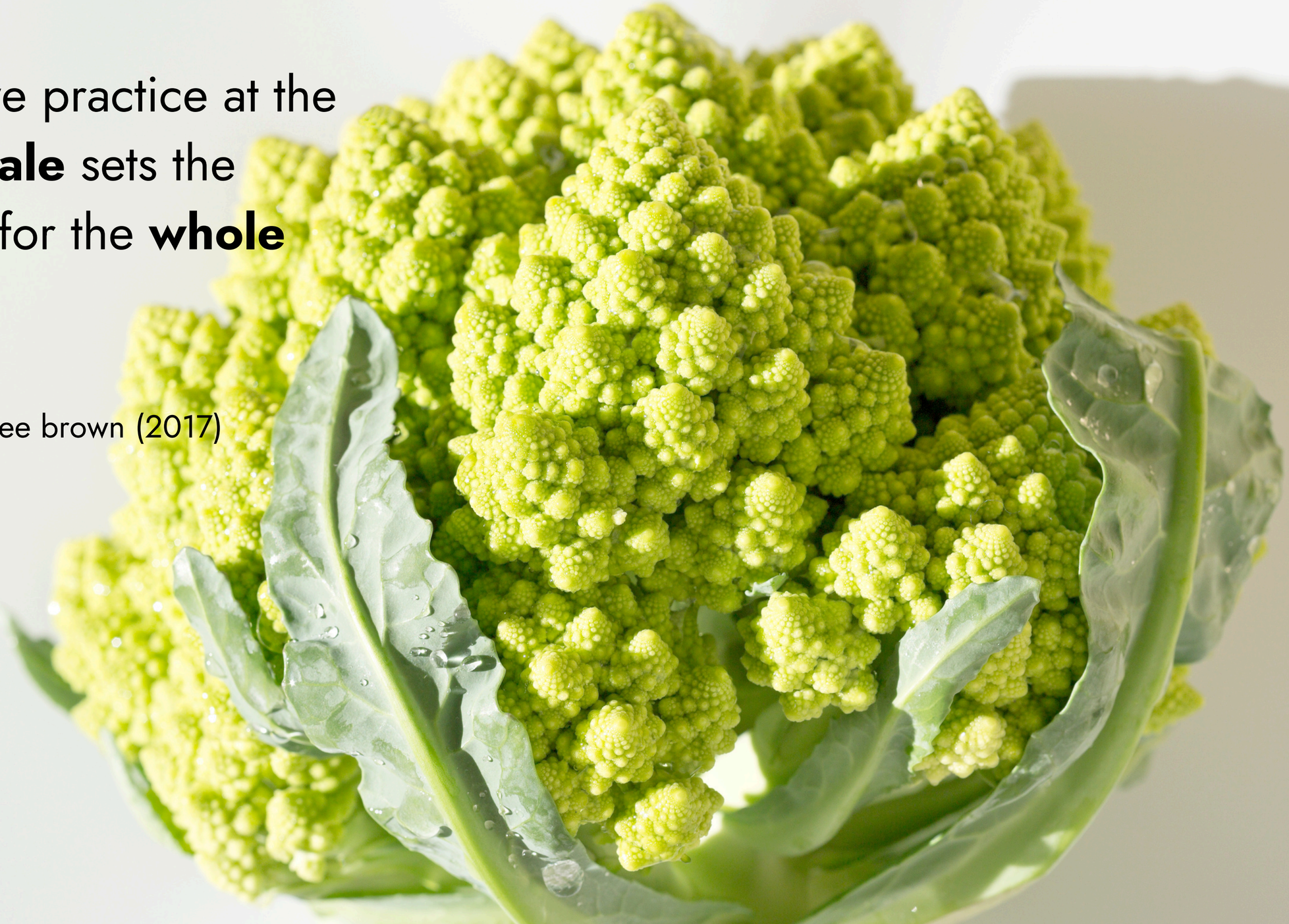
“What we practice at the **small scale** sets the patterns for the **whole system**”

adrienne maree brown (2017)

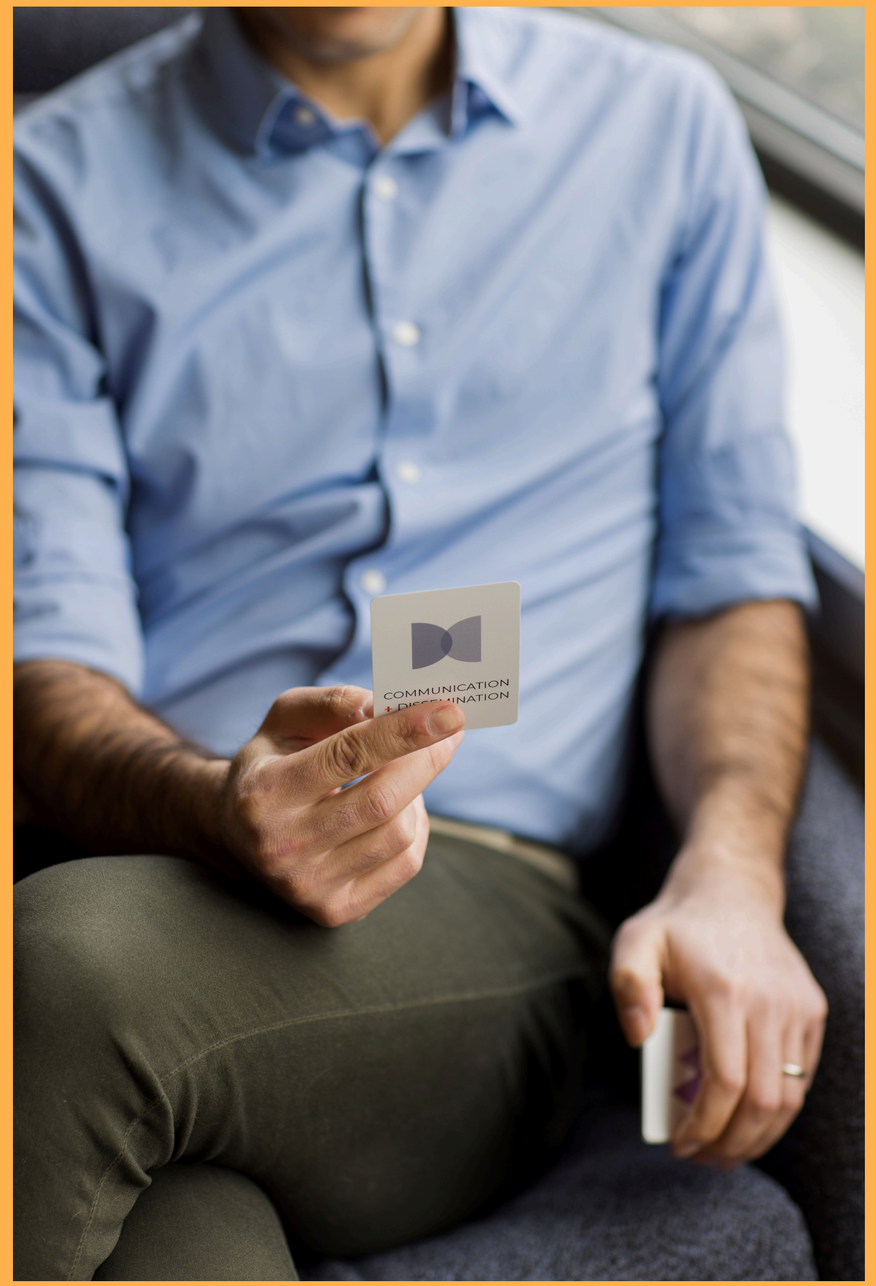


Stop | Start | Continue

What's a practice or a question you might carry forward?
What will you stop?

Jot it down!

Share in Whova



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Data equity deck
Use code: CQI10

Thank you!

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Business card
and links

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