

# **Educational Experiences of Young Indigenous Males in Queensland: Disrupting the School to Prison Pipeline**

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# DECLARATION

## CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Grace O'Brien declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Production Note:

**Signature:** Signature removed prior to publication.

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## ABSTRACT

Despite ample international literature regarding the school-to-prison pipeline, juvenile justice researchers in the Australian context have remained relatively silent about this phenomenon. While there are considerable studies investigating the criminological characteristics of juvenile detention in Australia; there is a substantial gap examining the educational exclusion of young Indigenous males from the formal education system and whether this has a direct bearing on their incarceration. In 1991 the Australian Federal Government released the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report. Of the 339 recommendations provided, *Recommendation 62* identified that there was an alarming over-representation of Indigenous youth coming into contact with the criminal justice system. Utilising Nakata's *Indigenous Standpoint Theory* and Gramsci's *Theory of Hegemony*, this study challenges the status quo of privilege and power that exists within the hierarchical institutions of education and the criminal justice system. A qualitative phenomenological approach and Yarning method is employed to engage nine participants from the community to tell their stories. Focussing specifically on a set of experiences relevant to Queensland State Schools, the key research themes identify that exclusion from school and the over-representation of young Indigenous males in the juvenile justice system may be connected. The implications of this study could have a significant impact on future research or policy direction for educators and those who work within the criminal justice system.

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## ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CTG	Closing the Gap
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DDYDC	Don Dale Youth Detention Centre
DET	Department of Education and Training
FCAATSI	Federal Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advancement
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
IST	Indigenous Standpoint Theory
NGO's	Non-government organisations
NHMRC	National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
RPSCAT	Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes 1837
SDA	School Disciplinary Absence
YJFNAB	Youth Justice First Nations Action Board

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Indigenous Australians** – is used throughout this thesis to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is critical to acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are two distinct groups, ‘each practicing unique traditions, retaining social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live’ (AIATSIS, 2018, np.) It is imperative to note that Indigenous peoples have diverse life experiences and educational opportunities dependent upon their circumstances. It is therefore important to qualify that stereotypical signifiers should be avoided when considering the findings of this research.

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